ANNELEEN MASSCHELEIN

The Unconcept

THE FREUDIAN UNCANNY IN LATE-TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEORY

The Unconcept

SUNY series, Insinuations: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, Literature

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Charles Shepherdson, editor

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The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory

Anneleen Masschelein

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This book has become a permanent reminder
of my brother Wouter, who is missed every day.
This book is dedicated to him and to my parents,
Lieve and Raf Masschelein, who have been
an inspiration throughout.

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Preface

The present book is the result of a longstanding research project that began in 1994. In 2002, the preface of my PhD began with a few lines from W. H. Auden's "This Lunar Beauty":

> But this was never
> A ghost's endeavour
> Nor, finished this,
> Was ghost at ease

These prophetic words announced an ongoing process of thinking about the uncanny that finally presents itself as a slim volume compared to the PhD text.

Over the years, the uncanny has continued to flourish, to meander, and to be criticized. Steeped in new research projects and teaching, I always kept one eye open for the new forms and journeys of the concept. At the same time, I strove to really capture the dynamic core of its specific conceptualization process as precisely as possible, in the hope of offering some new insights in what may seem to be familiar territories. I would first and foremost like to thank the editors at SUNY Press, Charles Shepherdson, Jane Bunker, and Andrew Kenyon, for believing in this project and for giving me the opportunity to put the uncanny to rest (if such a thing were possible . . .). I also want to thank Diane Ganeles and Anne M. Valentine for their help with the production of this book. In the course of my research, many people have been invaluable to my work. My heartfelt thanks to Dirk de Geest and Hendrik Van Gorp, who introduced me to literary theory, the gothic, and psychoanalysis, and also to writing and to academic life with great wisdom and wit. The first readers of this work, Jan Baetens, Sjef Houppermans, and Nicholas Royle, have continued to help me throughout the years: I would not be where I am today without their support. For the past four years, the National Research Fund of

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Michaël and Elliot: there are no words for what you mean to me. Life is so much better since you both arrived.

1

Introduction

> Imperfection is, paradoxically, a guarantee for survival.
>
> (Todorov 1980, 23)

1.1. A Genealogy of the Uncanny

In 1965, professor Siegbert S. Prawer concluded his inaugural lecture at Westfield College, London entitled "The 'Uncanny' in Literature. An Apology for its Investigation," with the following words.

> I hope to have demonstrated this evening that for all the dangers which attend a too exclusive preoccupation with it, for all the crude and melodramatic and morally questionable forms in which it so often confronts us, the uncanny in literature does speak of something true and important, and that its investigation, therefore is worth our while. (Prawer 1965, 25)

This cautious plea, uttered almost half a century ago, reminds us of how fast things change in a relatively brief period of time. Nowadays, the topic of the uncanny no longer begs for an apology. On the contrary, it is an accepted and popular concept in various disciplines of the humanities, ranging from literature and the arts, to philosophy, film studies, theory of architecture and sociology, and recently even crossing over to the "hard" field of robotics and artificial intelligence.

In the most basic definition, proposed by Sigmund Freud in 1919, the uncanny is the feeling of unease that arises when something familiar suddenly becomes strange and unfamiliar.[1] However,

by the time of the first monograph devoted to the subject, Nicholas Royle's *The Uncanny* (2003), the concept had expanded far beyond this concise definition. Perpetually postponing closure, Royle's uncanny is a general perspective, a style of thinking and writing, of teaching that is synonymous with "deconstruction." The uncanny becomes an insidious, all-pervasive "passe-partout" word to address virtually any topic: politics, history, humanity, technology, psychoanalysis, religion, alongside more familiar aesthetic questions, related to genres, specific literary texts and motifs commonly associated with the uncanny. Because the uncanny affects and haunts everything, it is in constant transformation and cannot be pinned down: "[t]he unfamiliar [. . .] is never fixed, but constantly altering. The uncanny is (the) unsettling (of itself)" (Royle 2003, 5). Royle's understanding of the term places him in a tradition of "uncanny thinking," to paraphrase Samuel Weber, most commonly associated with the works of Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Hélène Cixous, Jean-Michel Rey, Weber, Neil Hertz, Anthony Vidler, Elizabeth Wright, and Julian Wolfreys, to name but a few authors who extensively wrote on the uncanny.

As we will see, this type of thinking fundamentally questions and destabilizes the status and possibility of concepts and the uncanny has become a concept that signals this questioning. However, the present study also shows that this is but one side of the coin. The consequence of Royle's conception of the uncanny as a strategy and attitude of perpetual defamiliarization, deconstruction or "hauntology" is that the teaching practice he envisions and practices is highly individualistic and creative.[2] As a result *The Uncanny* consists of a horizontal collection of introductions to various subthemes of the uncanny, of different perspectives, of case studies, of essays, and of pieces of creative writings held or glued together by the signifier uncanny.[3] The fact that Prawer's apology is not listed in Royle's impressive bibliography cannot be considered as a flaw: Royle's book does not want to offer a systematic history of the uncanny, even if it accumulates a wealth of information, especially about the development of the uncanny in the last decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, it is unlikely that the name Prawer will ring a bell among contemporary scholars working on or interested in the uncanny, even if his extensive work on the uncanny was in many ways ahead of its time. His words remind us that the rise of the concept in different disciplines of the humanities is not a tale of straightforward ascent to conceptual clarity and complexity.

Prawer's apology is part of the genealogy of the uncanny, which is the topic of the present study. In accordance with Michel Foucault's

methodological conception of genealogy (1977 and 1979), a conceptual genealogy is not simply a historical account that describes the teleological development from origin to final concept, a history of ideas. Instead, it is a dynamic mapping of the processes of conceptualization—an oscillation between contingent and motivated transitions, based on material traces of conceptual awareness found in various types of discourse. A genealogical perspective also tries to understand why the uncanny's conceptual structure and content are not clear-cut. Thus, although it is by no means blind to the internal ambiguities of the uncanny as a concept, a conceptual genealogy nonetheless aims at a bigger, more distanced picture of the position and function of the concept as it travels between disciplines and decades.

Constructing or mapping a genealogy of the uncanny is not an easy task. One reason for this is that the uncanny is still a young concept compared to other aesthetic concepts, for instance, "the sublime." Although many scholars—such as Prawer, Harold Bloom, Hans-Thies Lehmann, or David Ellison—have argued that the sublime and the uncanny are closely related, there is a huge difference between the two from a discursive point of view. Several theoretical treatises on the sublime are known from the eighteenth and nineteenth century and even earlier (e.g., Longinus, Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, etc.). By contrast, a theory of the uncanny before the twentieth century can only resort to the occurrence of the word or to descriptions of the phenomenon in literary texts and artistic sources. The term was not considered as an aesthetic category and there was no theoretical or philosophical discourse before the twentieth century. As Martin Jay puts it in "The Uncanny Nineties": "by common consent, the theoretical explanation for the current fascination with the concept is Freud's 1919 essay, 'The Uncanny'" (Jay 1998, 157).

Indeed, it was Freud who raised the phenomenon and the word "*unheimlich*" to the status of a concept in the foundational essay "The Uncanny" ("Das Unheimliche") (Freud 1919h). At the end of the twentieth century, this rather short treatise had outgrown "its marginal position in the Freudian canon" (Ellison 2001, 52) and is now regarded as a central text for Freudian aesthetics.[4] In recent years several scholars have tried to demonstrate that Freud's essay is not the actual origin of the conceptualization by drawing attention to earlier studies by the psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch, the philosopher Friedrich Schelling (both cited by Freud), or the theologian Rudolf Otto, to name a few. Yet, despite this, Freud's essay "The Uncanny" remains the primary focus of attraction in the continuing fascination with the uncanny in culture and theory alike.

In other words, Freud remains "the founder of discourse" in the Foucaldian sense of the term because subsequent theorists have not superseded his centrality in the debate. (See Masschelein 2002, 65–66 and Royle 2003, 14.) At the same time, however, the uncanny in contemporary discourse has exceeded the boundaries of a strict psychoanalytic framework. Even if the uncanny is the Freudian uncanny, it can no longer be considered a psychoanalytic concept and one may even wonder whether this was ever the case. A careful examination of the word uncanny in Freud's oeuvre reveals that while the essay appeared at a turning point in Freud's thinking, it by no means occupied a central position, and it is doubtful that the uncanny actually enjoyed a significant conceptual status in Freud's theory. To go even further, none of the "original" conceptual gestures—Freud's included—were strong enough to immediately set off the conceptualization process. In fact, the concept of the uncanny has only really been picked up in the last three decades of the twentieth century, when Freud's 1919 essay on the topic was widely discovered, primarily in French and in Anglo-Saxon theory and literary criticism. This brings us to the central thesis of this book, namely that *the Freudian uncanny is a late-twentieth century theoretical concept*.

1.2. Different Stages in the Conceptualization of the Uncanny

After Freud's discovery and creation of the concept in 1919, there is a fairly long period of conceptual latency or preconceptualization until the mid-1960s. The interest in the uncanny in this period is limited to isolated and dispersed interventions, whose influence on the later conceptualization can be gauged only indirectly. This changes in the 1970–1980s, which is the actual conceptualization phase of the uncanny, marked by explicit conceptual awareness as well as by numerous in-depth readings of Freud's essay from various perspectives. Several authors (re)discover Freud's text more or less simultaneously, often independently of each other, and as a rule, they reflect on this discovery explicitly, for instance by emphasizing the marginal position of the essay or by questioning the status of the concept.[5] In this period, the concept of the uncanny undergoes significant changes. Theoretically, new meanings are introduced that thicken the conceptual tissue. Practically, the uncanny is lastingly associated with a specific kind of corpus, various types of narratives and motifs, and with a method of reading.

Factors contributing to the sudden attention to "The Uncanny" in this era are manifold. Within deconstruction, there is a preference for marginal texts. The rise of "Theory" in the wake of phenomenology, structuralism and poststructuralism, and hermeneutics calls for fresh concepts that function in a way that is different from "ordinary" theoretical concepts.[6] Among the first to draw attention to the metaphorical nature of "scientific" concepts, using the uncanny and other psychoanalytic concepts as primary examples, are Rey, Claudine Normand, and Neil Hertz. According to the linguist Normand, psychoanalytic concepts can serve as models for a new science in which theory and practice are intertwined. The tension between subjectivity and objectivity can be settled neither in terms of the classical hierarchical opposition of proper/figurative, nor in terms of the traditional scientific ideal of univocal meaning for the opposition between conscious and unconscious allows for the simultaneous existence of ambivalent meanings. Freud's "theoretical fictions" are metaphors in the strongest sense.[7] Not just descriptive, they guide the interpretation and perception of reality, and they produce effects in the psychoanalytic dialogue that exceed any conceptual definition.[8]

In this period, discursive shifts also lead to semantic exchanges of the Freudian uncanny with related aesthetic and philosophic notions such as the sublime, the fantastic, and alienation. Certain semantic kernels in Freud's elaboration of the uncanny—e.g., uncertainty, ambivalence, doubling, and the opposition between Eros and the death drives—are foregrounded to make it especially suitable for a contemporary theory and epistemology of fiction. Last but certainly not least, the concept of the uncanny is relevant in the emergent post- or neo-romantic cultural climate, both in the arts and in popular culture. After the upheavals of the 1960s and early 1970s, a renewed focus fell on the intimate and subjective experience. Followed by the bleaker political climate and the economic crisis of the 1980s, this experience is tinged by a deep-rooted sense of estrangement, unrest and (paranoid) anxiety, and by the acute awareness of the challenges posed by a rapidly evolving, globalized, increasingly virtual late-capitalist society: the nuclear threat and the Cold War, terrorism, nationalism, immigration and xenophobia, individualism, and the omnipresence of image and simulacra, etc. The concept of the uncanny at the same time addresses abstract theoretical concerns, the postromantic and neo-Gothic aesthetics, and the sociopolitical climate of the mediatized postindustrial Western society.

In the 1990s the concept of the uncanny stabilizes and expands. This is the phase of canonization and dissemination. The concept of the uncanny is now generally acknowledged as a concept. Freud's essay moves to a central position in the Freudian canon, and the uncanny appears as a keyword in a number of specialized lexica and vocabularies. There is a consensus about the origin of the term (Freud) and about its primary semantic cores. At the same time, the concept branches out from its source domains—psychoanalysis, "Theory" (or continental, poststructuralist philosophy and literary theory), and genre studies—to a variety of other fields: art history, film studies, architecture theory, postcolonial studies, sociology, anthropology, and the study of religion. Each new use adds to the conceptual substance of the uncanny. Moreover, at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, the Freudian uncanny leaps from the domain of criticism back into the domain of art, where it influences the visual arts as well as fiction. A crucial question arises here: how can the uncanny as a code, both for the artist and for the audience, still produce the unexpected, wild, undomesticated quality of the uncanny? At the onset of the twenty-first century, two publications with the same title demonstrate the entanglement between theory, criticism, and art: as already mentioned, Royle's *The Uncanny* (2003) and Mike Kelley's hefty catalogue *The Uncanny* (2004), published on the occasion of his exhibition in the Tate Gallery Liverpool. Both projects are devoted to the concept of the uncanny and provide a substantial introduction to its discourse. Moreover, they bring together significant widespread tendencies in the discourse on the uncanny including its links with a theoretical, critical, and creative practice—Royle predominantly in the field of literature, theory, and popular culture, Kelley for the visual arts.

The present study will not, however, focus on the heyday of the uncanny, roughly the period between 1980 and 2000, because this has been well documented. Instead, in order to study the conceptualization process as a whole, we will zoom in on the early preconceptual stages that lead up to the actual conceptualization. A close examination of the ways in which the uncanny developed in this early period, concentrating on semantic shifts and conceptual persona that were introduced in the process, including now forgotten and therefore unsuccessful ones, reveals how a breeding ground was established that allowed for the eventual conceptualization of the uncanny as we are familiar with it today. Because it is a young concept, the uncanny is still unstable and even sometimes flimsy as some critics have pointed out.[9] Looking at the genealogy of the concept reveals on the one hand the actual richness

and critical potential that exceeds its definitions. On the other hand, the concept's slips and oscillations, the in-betweens and dead-ends of its development in a living critical practice also become apparent. It is this trajectory that constitutes the interest of the uncanny as a concept because it reveals how an aesthetic concept always exceeds the boundaries that are established in its elaboration.

1.3. The Uncanny as Unconcept

Conceptualization is never just the work of one or more persons. It entails a kind of creative energy that circulates and momentarily converges and crystallizes over various decades and national traditions. The discourse on the uncanny, within psychoanalysis and in other disciplines, has been uniquely characterized by a meta- or self-reflexive concern with concepts. Elsewhere, I have discussed how different aspects of this concern coincide with different moments of conceptualization: an awareness of the act and necessity of creating concepts, a striving for consensus and conceptual stability, different forms of critique, and finally, the transmission or pedagogy of the concept (Masschelein 2002). Rather than mutually exclusive or successive phases, these aspects must be regarded as recurring moments of conceptualization that continue to interact throughout the process, keeping the concept vital and productive.

Like other Freudian concepts, the uncanny is a lexical concept, i.e., it is borrowed from natural language. Although Freud and numerous scholars after him have stressed that the German word "unheimlich" is untranslatable qua form and content, more or less the same feeling can be expressed by words such as "creepy," "eerie," "weird," or the more common French term "*insolite*" instead of the wordy official translation *inquiétante étrangeté*. Affects are, as Freud points out, highly subjective, but they are also objective in the sense that they are recognizable across different cultures and ages, independent of the words used to categorize them. Likewise, the theoretical concept of "the uncanny" refers to a construct or compound of ideas that is not necessarily limited to the word. For instance, in the 1990s, when Marxist theory was in decline—partly due to political events like the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—the concept of the uncanny was used interchangeably with alienation, estrangement, and defamiliarization, concepts that played a crucial role in critical and aesthetic theory in the first half of the twentieth century. In other discourses, the uncanny becomes a synonym for the disruptive powers of fiction, especially in

relation to knowledge and by extension, philosophy, or what is now called "Theory." In other cases, the uncanny signifies the secularized or negative sublime. Still, the specific conceptualization of the uncanny is also very much anchored to the word; as we will see, it is the signifier that holds the diverging semantic trajectories together. Moreover, the specificity of the concept of the uncanny is linked to certain linguistic features. Freud was the first to draw attention to the lexical ambivalence of the word: "unheimlich" is the negation of "heimlich" in the sense of "familiar, homely," but it also coincides with the second meaning of "heimlich," "hidden, furtive." From a psychoanalytic point of view, this ambivalence is not extraordinary. The prefix "un-" is not merely a linguistic negation, it is the "token of repression." This entails that the uncanny is marked by the unconscious that does not know negation or contradiction; even when something is negated, it still remains present in the unconscious. According to this reasoning, the contradiction resulting from negation is not exclusive or binary: denying something at the same time conjures it up. Hence, it is perfectly possible that something can be familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

Like the concept of the unconscious itself, the uncanny as a negative concept can be regarded as a *mise-en-abyme* for the logic of Freudianism, which in the last decades of the twentieth century will be presented as a critique of scientific rationalism, the suppositions of the Enlightenment project, and an alternative to the exclusive binary logics of "either/or" that must be transformed in the open-ended deconstructive "neither/nor" or, more affirmatively, in the plurality of "and/and." This new way of thinking is engrained both in the conceptual content of the uncanny and in the way in which the uncanny functions in discourse: often questioned and criticized, the uncanny has undeniably become a prominent concept in a wide variety of cultural discourses. For this movement to come about, however, shifts in the concept had to occur. For instance, it was necessary to split the conceptual persona of Freud into various roles: the old-fashioned male chauvinist scientist versus the visionary writer—as Bloom put it, the only twentieth-century poet of the sublime—who intuited, partly in spite of himself, a revolutionary new way of thinking that awaits disclosure and that has the possibility to infect and undermine old ways of thinking.

Aside from its lexical ambivalence, the second linguistic feature of the uncanny is its function as a substantivized adjective. This grammatical form denotes openness and indefiniteness, as opposed to the substantive "uncanniness" or "*Unheimlichkeit*" (a term often

found in Heideggerian discourse) that indicates a state or an essence. The substantivized adjective is a common lexical form for aesthetic concepts, such as the sublime, the beautiful, the grotesque, the gothic, which are according to Freud "affects." It is useful here to distinguish between the psychological notion of affect (feeling or emotion) linked to a subject, and affect as aesthetic category. This can be defined as the effect of the confrontation with a work of art. The distinction between affect and aesthetic concept has been elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1996) where they examine three types of thinking: philosophy, science, and art.

Genuine creative thinking—as opposed to the opinions or *doxa* prevalent in the media for instance, which merely try to cover up the chaos—is a way of mapping chaos, or of turning chaos into a "plane" or domain. In order to accomplish this, philosophy, science, and art use fundamentally different tools as they lay out different planes. Philosophy operates on the plane of immanence by creating concepts. These are abstract mental objects that are nonetheless material and possess a certain substance. Concepts are inherently dynamic and ever-changing. They have to be continually recreated in thought in order to remain alive (i.e., directed toward becoming). Concepts are not created by philosophers but by "conceptual personae," i.e., the agents who put forth preconcepts that become concepts in a process of institutionalization, canonization, and pedagogy.[10] Art is another way of thinking that lays out a plane of composition onto the material (language, sound, stone, canvas . . .). It creates percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations. These are the concrete but impersonal results of perceptions, feelings, and sensations materialised in the work of art, independent of artist, character, or public. The percepts and affects of aesthetic figures are radically distinct from perceptions or affectations of a subject.[11] The artwork embodies affects and precepts that are past as well as eternally present and that can be activated or resuscitated as an event. Thus, the affect exceeds the material limits of the artistic creation and resonates with the infinite chaos from which it arises.

Despite their specificity and autonomy, the activities of philosophy, art, and science do "join up in the brain," creating interferences between different types of thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 216). Extrinsic interferences occur when one discipline looks at another from the perspective of its own plane, for instance, when philosophy tries to make a concept of a sensation or when art creates sensations of concepts. This is what happened when Freud created the concept of the affect of the uncanny, especially in his reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's

novella "The Sandman." He reads a literary text looking for conceptual value and thereby elevates an aesthetic figure, Hoffmann, to the status of conceptual persona: Hoffmann "has succeeded in producing uncanny effects better than anyone else" and he unfailingly points us to the most important causes of the uncanny (Freud 1919h, 227). However, in this extrinsic interference, the domains of psychoanalysis and literature do not really mix.

When elements or agents slip from one plane onto another and become indistinguishable, for example, when concepts and conceptual personae slide from the plane of immanence (i.e., philosophy) onto the plane of composition (i.e., art), intrinsic interferences occur in which the two planes cannot easily be disentangled. In the genealogy of the uncanny, we can observe how at a specific moment in time Freud as a conceptual persona—the psychoanalyst who often stages dialogues in his texts—is turned into an aesthetic or even comic figure. His personal traits and affects, like intellectual uncertainty, seduction, or naïve rationalism, are highlighted in many critical-creative readings of "The Uncanny" that stress the interrelation between literature and theory. Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms," which is extensively analyzed in chapter 4, is a prototype for this "double reading" that sets out to create an affect of the Freudian concept of the uncanny by reading the essay not as a scientific essay but as a literary text, focusing specifically on Freud as an aesthetic figure. In another turn of the screw, Freud subsequently becomes a new conceptual persona: the advocate of a new kind of thinking that can be called "Freudianism" and the affect of the uncanny is conceptualized as an effect produced by reading fiction, with serious implications for theory as well, even in domains that seem far removed from literature, like sociology (Gordon (1997) 2008).

The third kind of interference has to do with the reference of each kind of thinking to its negative or to its "No." In Deleuze and Guattari's view, this is where thinking touches chaos, not in a dialectical sense, but as a constant centrifugal or deterritorialising reference.

> Philosophy needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it; it needs a nonphilosophical comprehension just as art needs nonart and science needs nonscience. They do not need the No as beginning, or as the end in which they would be called upon to disappear by being realized, but at every moment of their becoming or their development. (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 218)

The permanent contact of forms of knowledge with their negative constitutes chaos, which for Deleuze and Guattari represents the most enigmatic type of interference between the three planes because it cannot be described in terms of what is known. What is extracted or summoned forth by art, philosophy, and science in a truly creative act always precariously balances on the edge of nothing or the unknown. The recognisable shapes of concept, function, and affect emanate from the undifferentiated shadow or chaos that remains their common denominator, "as if they shared the same shadow that extends itself across their different nature and constantly accompanies them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 218).

The dynamics of art, philosophy, and science are the point where thinking comes to life in a process of renewal and growth, but also of failure. The genealogy of the uncanny that will be unfolded in the following pages is therefore also to be understood in a Deleuzian sense. Throughout, it aims to render a sense of being in touch with "nonthinking." Every successful conceptualization of the uncanny is doubled and also determined by failing conceptualizations. Different conceptual cores come to the fore, while others retreat into the background, only sometimes to suddenly appear again in a different form. In this sense, the term "unconcept" exceeds the unconscious dynamics of repression and the return of the repressed, which are pivotal to the psychoanalytic conceptualization of the term.[12] It also serves as a reminder of the concept's peculiar location "in between" or "on the verge": on the verge of sliding from the plane of immanence onto the plane of composition and vice versa, on the verge between concept and affect, and on the verge of no longer being a concept, of dissipating again into chaos or into *doxa* and emerging from it in unexpected ways.

1.4. A Functionalist-Discursive Perspective

A genealogy is based on the study of the traces of conceptualization in discourse. These traces can be understood as the heterogeneous sum of concrete signs of the construction, awareness, and questioning of concepts found in texts. This is a functionalist rather than an essentialist starting point because it concerns the way the uncanny functions in various discourses. Moreover, instead of trying to come up with a conclusive definition or an origin of the uncanny, this type of research is interested in the dynamics and trajectories of conceptualization,

including the successes and failures of conceptualization. In this particular case, it means exploring the tension between canonization and instability that constitutes an important part of the concept of the Freudian uncanny. The aim is to map the rich and chaotic material without losing track of the dynamics and the irregularity of the ongoing process of conceptualization. In order to do this, the research relies on a broad, representative archive of sources that is comparative (English, French, German, and Dutch) and interdisciplinary, gathered according to strict procedures that will be outlined below. The results of this work not only apply to the uncanny in particular; they may also bear on the status of aesthetic concepts in the late twentieth and twenty-first century, the age of Theory and Post-Theory. Furthermore, they question the way in which research is conducted in this electronic age and the effects of this on the knowledge we produce and construct.

Underlying all this is the methodological assumption that a genealogy must be based on a broad corpus that includes as many material traces of conceptualization as possible, regardless of their apparent historical or semantic priority or relevance. The corpus is compiled by combining a strict formal procedure with an openness toward the material. The formal point of departure in this study is the occurrence of "unheimlich" and its translations: "uncanny," "unhomely," and "inquiétante étrangeté." This adherence to the signifier can be regarded as an intensification of the way in which researches are ordinarily conducted since the popularization of search engines. A first step is to run the search terms through a large number of indexes and search engines, paper and electronic, academic and more general. In the 1990s, the search term "uncanny" in electronic searches invariably pointed to "The Uncanny X-Men," a popular comic series. However, combining the keywords "uncanny/unheimlich + Freud" to a large extent excluded these ordinary uses of uncanny. Nowadays, the Freudian uncanny comes up first and in the last decades of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century the key word "uncanny" leads to an explosive number of sources.

However, this method is not foolproof. Despite their utopian promise of immediate access to universal knowledge, search engines like Google, as well as more academic ones like the MLA Index of Periodicals, Arts and Humanities Citations Index, Francis, Project Muse, PsychInfo, Philospher's Index, Web of Science . . . to name a few, are obviously limited by all kind of factors and must be supplemented by the old-fashioned library and archive.[13] Following the lead of citations and manually going through books and journals resulted in a fairly

large and heterogeneous corpus of all kinds of texts, written from 1919 until the beginning of 2000, that has been regularly updated until 2009. Moreover, focusing on the Freudian uncanny also excludes other uses of the word that occurred independently of Freud, for instance by the theologian Otto or philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Friedrich Nietzsche. This lacuna was compensated for by scanning indexes for these authors, focusing on the occurrence of the word in their work. This double-check in most cases confirmed that "unheimlich" in the work of most of these thinkers—with the notable exception of Otto—has been discovered in the wake of the Freudian uncanny.

Only after one becomes acquainted with the conceptual value of "uncanny" the word begins to stand out in other contexts. This phenomenon is what will be called "stickiness" or "viscosity" (of the signifier). Stickiness runs through this book as a vague yet material metaphor to indicate the subterraneous factors at work in conceptualization, both on an individual and an inter-subjective level. Although a word and a concept are not the same thing, from a functionalist perspective the word "uncanny" holds together the conceptual tissue; it forms a cluster of heterogeneous conceptual elements like a Band-Aid or adhesive tape. Moreover the stickiness of the word also attracts new associations and variations that are by no means always motivated by conscious or deliberate moves, and these ensure the dynamism of the concept. A few brief examples can illustrate this. As will be shown in Chapter 2, in various indexes to Freud's oeuvre the keyword "uncanny" leads to divergent, sometimes inconsistent sources. This disparateness casts doubt on the conceptual value and position of the uncanny in Freud's work, but at the same time the word uncanny also inspired later critics to establish new, sometimes idiosyncratic connections within Freud's oeuvre, while other, more obvious links remain curiously underexamined. As Wolfreys pointed out, words that were virtually ignored can suddenly become significant and important. Moreover, the marginal position of the essay in Freud's oeuvre facilitated its isolation or detachment from the theoretical framework in which it is embedded. In Chapter 4 we will see how in the 1970s and 1980s, the Freudian uncanny became tangled up with Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist genre categories of *l'étrange* (literally: the strange) and *le fantastique* (the fantastic) through the English and German translations of Todorov's work. Thirdly, it is remarkable that many English and French texts use the original German word "unheimlich" rather than its translation (often in grammatically incorrect ways) in order to pun on the root "*Heim*/home," leading to the alternative concept

"unhomely" in architecture and postcolonial theory. This fetishistic attachment to the signifier again reveals the complex relation between word and concept that underlies many etymological inquiries, not in the least Freud's extensive research on the lexical ambivalence of the word in "The Uncanny."

Foregrounding these mechanisms results in a view of conceptualization that takes into account coincidences, fruitful misreadings, strategic but not always logical associations, and puns. The rise of a concept is not just a chronological succession of creative acts; it is the result of a double movement. On the one hand, associations and links can narrow down and focus the concept's radius (territorialization in Deleuzian terms), which result in a vertical conceptualization that aims at an essence or core contained in a definition and achieved through processes of filtering and reducing meanings. On the other hand, they also expand in a horizontal, rhizomatic network of sidetracks and creative new applications of the concept (deterritorialization) in which associative patterns proliferate. This double movement is typical for the domain in which the uncanny functions as an unconcept, i.e., "Theory." As a concept that at the same time signifies its opposite, as a theoretical fiction as well as a flimsy label, the uncanny's operation is often determined by a style characterized by playing and punning on the literal and figurative meaning of "unheimlich," allusions to specific passages and phrases from "The Uncanny," frequent use of parody and metaphorical and metonymic displacement. This is in accordance with Jean-Michel Rabaté's description of "Theory" in *The Future of Theory* as a postromantic and postmodern phenomenon in which personal style is extremely important. Theory is a complex mixture of a genuine passion for thinking, opportunistic institutional reasoning, and slavish submission to fashionable master thinkers. This may result in an ongoing "procession" of new concepts and signifiers that insures its openness and dynamism, but also risks becoming trivial and meaningless. Theory in this sense is not a solid foundational construction like philosophy but a hybrid genre in which conceptual, historical, creative, and fictional discourses interact.

Although Rabaté sees "Theory" as a cyclical phenomenon, others have argued that the heyday of this hybrid form can be situated around the 1970s and 1980s, the period in which the concept of the uncanny also materializes.[14] At the same time, the conceptualization and dissemination of the uncanny also coincides with the rise of the Internet. Since the late 1990s, keyword-based research not only provides easy access to an growing number of sources but also greatly

facilitates stickiness because it is based primarily on keywords.[15] Because of the way in which we nowadays search for information, jumping from link to link, our concepts are not just in theory but also in practice more flexible and open-ended. They can easily travel between different fields and topics by association. At the same time, however, this type of concept also shows a hollowness at the core. Because its structure can never be entirely articulated, a concept like the uncanny also remains precarious and subject to fashion.

1.5. (Re)Constructing a Map of Conceptualizations

The organization of the material in this book is largely chronological. The second chapter returns to (and destabilizes) the "origin" of the concept, not by offering another reading of Freud's "The Uncanny," but by situating the essay in Freud's thought as a whole. The focus lies on those areas where the uncanny surfaces in a conceptual sense in order to determine to what extent the uncanny is a concept in Freud's work. Chapter 3 examines the phase of "preconceptualization" in the first writings on the uncanny within psychoanalysis and within literary criticism and theory in the period between 1919 and 1970. These first applications and elaborations of the concept have been largely forgotten in the later conceptualizations, but although their influence on the conceptualization process can only be gauged indirectly, a number of shifts introduced in this period are nonetheless crucial for the subsequent conceptualization of the uncanny. Chapter 4 zooms in on the turning point in the conceptualization process of the uncanny with a detailed analysis of three determining discursive events that occurred around 1970, namely Derrida's "The Double Session," Todorov's *The Fantastic*, and Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche ("The 'Uncanny'")." In two complementary discursive and rhetorical readings of Todorov and Cixous, the complexity of the conceptualization process and its shadow-history is cast in a different light. Belatedly, one can see how the singular events of Derrida, Todorov, and Cixous intertwined to push the uncanny to the fore as a concept and paved the way for its canonization by bringing the uncanny in close proximity with other concepts and a corpus of literary texts, by creating new conceptual personae and by introducing styles that have become connected with the concept of the uncanny. Chapter 5, finally, enlarges the scope to a broad encyclopaedic outline of the later evolutions of the uncanny.

It focuses on its canonization and dissemination, on its relations with neighbouring concepts and different fields, and finally on its place within the arts and popular culture.

The discursive mapping of the corpus material is neither a mere formal reconstruction, nor a "map of misreading" in the Bloomian sense of a battle of "strong" and "weak" conceptual uses. In the material dealing with the uncanny, a number of crosscuts are made and integrated in a chronological, historical framework that includes more general institutional circumstances (e.g., journals or academic traditions) in which texts or statements have been produced. This institutional and intellectural background is supplemented by detailed readings of key texts as singular discursive events that represent views voiced at a particular space, in a given moment and sociocultural climate. Between these views or conceptions there may be contact, as is clear in cases of overt influences or debate, but this is not necessarily so. The conceptual map is not based on the well-known texts on "The Uncanny," nor does it opt for one clear perspective on the process, psychoanalytic, deconstructive, or (post)structuralist, to name the domains with which the notion is most commonly associated. Instead, all of these as well as other "theoretical" approaches (e.g., systems theory) have inspired this genealogy. As a result, the self-reflexive, metatheoretical dimension of the uncanny continually backfires on this project: the questions that are asked have been dealt with in various ways within the corpus itself.

As Deleuze and Guattari point out, making a map is not the same as sketching contours.[16] It means getting out there, into the material itself, and digging one's hands in. By focusing on the conceptualization of the uncanny in a systematic and constrained way, rather than on individual authors or networks, the aim of this study is to offer momentary freeze-frames of the conceptualization process of the uncanny in its dynamism and its complexity. Hopefully, in going back to the uncanny's past lives and trajectories, the present study will cast a new light on familiar, contemporary debates and maybe open up avenues for future conceptual research in the humanities.

2

The Position of the Uncanny in Freud's Oeuvre

2.1. Follow the Index?

It is rather remarkable that, despite the ongoing interest in the uncanny, no systematic account of the position of the concept of the uncanny within Freud's oeuvre is available, even though partial links to other texts and notions have, of course, been examined. This is due to several reasons: the text's generic indeterminacy, Freud's own relative disregard of the essay after 1921, and the general confusion between the word "uncanny" as a concept or as a common German adjective. As the editors of the recent French Freud translation point out, Freud rarely quoted the essay after 1919, even if he repeatedly used the adjective "unheimlich": "It is important to emphasize that the word *unheimlich* functions in the entire oeuvre of Freud, well beyond the linguistic overdetermination revealed by Freud in '*Das Unheimliche*.'" (Bourguignon e.a. 1989, 109, my trans.)[1] One may indeed wonder to what extent "unheimlich" can be considered a full-fledged concept within Freud's thought. A quick examination of a number of bibliographical instruments is surprisingly inconsistent when it comes to the keyword "unheimlich."

The index of the *Studienausgabe* alphabetically lists the main entries and references for the texts per volume.[2] Four of the ten volumes include an entry to the substantivized adjective "Unheimliche, das," one of which is obviously the fourth volume, *Psychologische Schriften* (*Psychological Writings*), which contains the essay. Both in the first volume that contains Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–1917) and the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933a), as well as in the fifth volume, *Sexualleben* (*Sexual Life*), the adjective is used in the context of anxiety, without however announcing the

essay. In volume IX, *Fragen der Gesellschaft und Religion* (*Questions about Society and Religion*), no less than seven references are found: in *Totem and Taboo* (1912–1913) there is a crossreference to "The 'Uncanny'" (Freud 1912–1913, 43) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921c) contains the clearest reference to the essay after 1919: "Let us recall that hypnosis has something positively uncanny about it; but the character of uncanniness suggests something old and familiar that has undergone repression" (Freud 1921c, 125). Except for one mention of the adjective in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939a), the *Studienausgabe*'s index only encloses references to the substantivized adjective "das Unheimliche" and is therefore not complete.

The index to the *Standard Edition* includes three main entries related to "uncanny": "Uncanniness," "Uncanny, the," and "Uncanny, sense of, in obsessional neurosis." Most of the references are to "The Uncanny." The first keyword, "Uncanniness (of coincidence)," contains two references to *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The substantivized adjective "Uncanny, the" (without further specification of added keywords) refers to *Totem and Taboo*, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910a), to the introductory lecture on anxiety (1916–17), and to *The Future of an Illusion* (1927c). The third keyword refers to the case of the Rat Man (1909d). In 1993, Dany Nobus compiled an extensive bibliographical repertory of the use of "unheimlich" by Freud in an explicit effort to fill in the lacunae in the indexes of the *Studienausgabe*, the *Gesamtausgabe*, and the *Standard Edition*.[3] Nobus chronologically lists twenty-eight texts by Freud that contain the word "unheimlich," usually adding a few words to situate the adjective in its context. In some cases, the link to "The Uncanny" is quite straightforward and acceptable. The occurrences of the term may be considered as precursors or as more or less explicit references to the essay, depending on the time of writing. However, in just as many other cases, there are no indications that the use goes beyond the common meaning of the adjective.[4]

Nobus's attitude toward the usage of the word in several essays that are indirectly related to the topic is ambivalent.[5] In their introduction to the Dutch translation of the story "Inexplicable" discussed in "The Uncanny," Nobus and Quakelbeen suggest that Freud may have included the story in his text because of the literal occurrence of the word "uncanny." If we extend this to the other (literary) examples in "The Uncanny," Freud may have been guided by the mere presence of the word "unheimlich" on more than one occasion. This reasoning would certainly hold for Hoffmann's association with the uncanny because the word repeatedly occurs in "The Sandman" as well as in

other stories, such as "The Uncanny Guest." Rey comments on this (unconscious) stickiness: "By the way, Freud does not indicate the intervention *in Hoffmann's text* of the terms *heimlich* and *unheimlich*; no doubt because he is too attentive to the *theme as such* and to the effect that it is supposed to produce" (Rey 1974, 11 n12, my trans.). Freud is not only seduced by the stickiness of the word in Hoffmann, in his discussion of Hoffmann as an uncanny writer he follows the example of Jentsch.[6]

Freud's associative method in writing the essay is belatedly justified by the methodological remarks at the beginning of the essay. Moreover, the fact that Freud rarely alluded to the essay in his later work might indicate that he was not entirely satisfied with the result. For him, the concept did not seem to "stick." And yet, Nobus is rather keen on proving that the uncanny was a (pre-)concept, in the sense that it was used in a systematic and deliberate way, already at an early stage in Freud's work. In "Freud versus Jentsch," he speculates that Freud's insistent refusal of the hypothesis of intellectual uncertainty and the similarities between the two essays indicate that Freud considered Jentsch as a rival. The reason for this may be that Freud had already touched upon the clinical grounds for the concept before Jentsch's essay was published (1906) and that he wanted to claim the concept for himself. These clinical foundations are found in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, specifically in the repeated references to "uncanny noises" accompanying the primal scene, i.e., parental intercourse overheard or witnessed by the child (Nobus 1993a, 62–63). Nobus suggests that Freud's use of the word in the context of the primal scene is not accidental, for he wanted to define a particular nuance of anxiety that is related to sexuality. Although Nobus is aware of the widespread use of the German word and of the fact that "the term in the quoted passage can indeed hardly be granted the status of concept" (Nobus 1993a, 63, my trans.), he does feel that the occurrence of a second similar reference in the case study of Dora makes the claim more solid.

Because Nobus wants to situate the conceptual origin of the uncanny before 1906, so that it would fit the frame of his discussion on Freud and Jentsch, he overlooks other, more convincing traces of a conceptual awareness of the concept, e.g., passages on déjà vu and superstition in *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life* (1901b) or the footnote on the fear of being buried alive in *The Interpretation of Dreams* added in 1909.[7] These omissions correspond to another gap in the bibliography that turns out to be symptomatic: *Totem and Taboo*, essential to the conceptual framework of the essay. This gap in Nobus's

otherwise so detailed repertory is probably due to Nobus's intent of complementing other registers, nonetheless, it reflects a (Lacanian) bias in favour of theoretical-clinical and literary interests at the expense of phylogenetic themes.

A comparison of indexes listing "unheimlich" surprisingly reveals that there is little consensus on the uncanny in Freud's oeuvre, apart from "The Uncanny" itself. The index to the *Studienausgabe* especially points to Freud's phylogenetic works; *The Standard Edition* also enlists the more theoretical and clinical introductory lectures and the case study of the Rat Man. In privileging the grammatical form of the substantivized adjective and even of the substantive "Uncanniness," the *Studienausgabe* and *The Standard Edition* list most of the passages where the conceptual value is the highest. By contrast, Nobus has gathered nearly all occurrences of "unheimlich," regardless of the grammatical context. This results in a large repertory of undeniably interesting uses, including quotes, of which it is sometimes hard to determine the conceptual significance. However, Nobus's blind spot for the phylogenetic writings is almost as revealing as his impressive collection. Alain Delrieu's 1997 thematic index to Freud's work, *Sigmund Freud. Index thématique et raisonné, alphabétique, chronologique, anthologique, commenté*, also fails to mention *Totem and Taboo*. Under the lemma "Etrangeté (l'inquiétante . . .) (*Das Unheimliche*)," four sources are cited: the case study of the Rat Man, an account of the 1910 meeting of the *Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung* in which the word "unheimlich" does not appear as such, "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913f), and finally "The Uncanny," which is summarized in six passages that corroborate the slant that the debate on the Freudian uncanny will take at the end of the twentieth century: ambivalence, the repetition compulsion and the death drive, and most of all, the application of the concept to literature.

The lack of consistency in the references is a reminder that we cannot just rely on indexes and glossaries when trying to establish the position of the essay within Freud's oeuvre. A discursive analysis of the entire oeuvre is needed to adequately map the uncanny's conceptual position within the Freudian framework. In the following paragraphs, "The Uncanny" will be situated at the intersection of different generic affiliations in Freud's oeuvre, which is more consistent and coherent than may appear at first sight. It is not easy to just pull a few threads without tearing the whole texture. Then again, the entire framework is under continual critical examination. Freud rarely obliterates questions and problems so that his theory is also fragmented, unfinished, unbalanced. Moreover, innovations or turning points in

various areas of his research do not neatly coincide. Certain innovations are introduced in earlier works and later retracted or elaborated upon. "The Uncanny" is typically an essay where various chronologies in his thinking intersect.

2.2. The Uncanny as a Symptom in Daily Life and in Pathology

In the twelfth chapter of *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life*—Freud's collection of common phenomena like jokes, forgetfulness, slips of the tongue that reveal the workings of the unconscious in the psyche of "normal" people—on determinism and superstitions, an early, noteworthy reference to the uncanny is found.[8]

> We must also include in the category of the miraculous and the "uncanny" the peculiar feeling we have, in certain moments and situations, of having had exactly the same experience once before or of having once been before in the same place, though our efforts never succeed in clearly remembering the previous occasion that announces itself in this way. (Freud 1901b, 265)

The technical term for this particular phenomenon is *déjà vu*, which Freud interprets as a memory of an "unconscious fantasy" (Freud 1901b, 266).[9] The case of déjà vu is not explicitly resumed in "The Uncanny," except if one takes into account the allusion to the dream in which the dreamer has the sensation of having been somewhere before, interpreted as the wish to return to the mother's body.[10] However, other uncanny phenomena discussed in *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life*, such as seemingly meaningful coincidences, superstitions, prophetic dreams, and presentiments, are explained as projections of the psyche onto the outer world, a reasoning that will be further developed in his interpretation of demons, the double, and animism in *Totem and Taboo* and in "The Uncanny."

In clinical terms, déjà vu and *déjà entendu* have to do with estrangement, which, as Delrieu points out, was discussed in the scientific meeting of May 18, 1910 of the *Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung*, devoted to "the feeling of the strange in the dream and in life." Wilhelm Stekel, who introduced the debate, ascribes the feeling that everything is dreamlike to a "breakthrough of the unconscious" (Nunberg and Federn 1977, 493, my trans.). The actual

loss of reality is caused by confusion between symbol and reality. In the phenomenon of déjà vu, something seems familiar because reality corresponds to an unconscious representation. In the feeling of strangeness, the opposite happens; reality no longer corresponds to a representation. The patients' mental alienation is reflected in their attitude toward their environment. In the discussion with Wilhelm Stekel, Alfred Adler, and Viktor Tausk, Freud distinguishes between two kinds of strangeness: either the strangeness is a defense mechanism in hysteria or it is a rejection of reality by a megalomaniac ego. In both cases, the strangeness originates in the ego and announces the concept of narcissism. The sense of strangeness is opposed to the reality principle. When the pleasure principle dominates the psyche, the inner reality is overemphasized, whereas outside reality appears strange. This occurs not only in neurosis but also in the domain of art, which looms in the background of the discussion through the use of terms like "symbol" and "fantasy" and the literary examples (e.g., *Tartarin de Tarascon* by Alphonse Daudet and *Don Quixote*). Remnants of this discussion may have found their way into "The Uncanny" in the rather enigmatic phrases about the blurred limit between fantasy and reality and between symbol and content:

> [. . .] an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on. It is this factor which contributes not a little to the uncanny effect attached to magic practices. (Freud 1919h, 244)

Toward the end of his life, Freud makes a distinction between alienation and depersonalisation in the "An Experience on the Acropolis" (1936a). Standing on the Acropolis with his brother, Freud is suddenly overcome by the feeling that what he is experiencing is not real, that it is somehow fictitious.

> These derealizations are remarkable phenomena which are still little understood. They are spoken of as "sensations," but they are obviously complicated processes [. . .] These phenomena are to be observed in two forms: the subject feels that a piece of reality or that a piece of his own self is strange to him. In the latter case we speak of "depersonalisations"; derealizations and depersonalizations are intimately

> connected. There is another set of phenomena which may be reagarded as their positive counterparts—what are known as "*fausse reconnaissance*," "*déjà vu*," "*déjà raconté*" etc., illusions in which we seek to accept something as belonging to our ego, just as in the derealizations we are anxious to keep something out of us. [. . .] Depersonalization leads us on to the extraordinary condition of "*double consciousness.*" (Freud 1936a, 244–245)

Alienation and depersonalisation are like repression, forms of defense; the temporary failure of memory is meant to protect the ego. Although Freud does not refer to "The Uncanny," it is clear that what is described here is close to the mechanisms of splitting and doubling described in 1919. In the experience on the Acropolis, Freud attributes the feeling of unreality to ambivalence: his satisfaction of having made it there is mixed with guilt of having surpassed the father.

The word uncanny is used in most of the important case studies: the cases of Dora (1905e), the Rat Man (1909d), Schreber (1911c) (in a quote by Schreber), and the Wolf Man (1918b). Although the last case is chronologically closer to the essay and more often linked to it in secondary literature,[11] the Rat Man is the only case study that is explicitly referred to in "The Uncanny." It establishes a primordial link between the uncanny as aesthetic affect, as symptom, and as phylogenetic remainder. The Rat Man suffers from obsessive-compulsive neurosis. He tries to control his compulsive thoughts and fears and exaggerated superstition by the repeated performance of certain acts and rituals. This behaviour sets in motion a chain reaction of guilt and punishment and at the same time an irresistible urge to transgress the rigid set of self-imposed rules. The Rat Man's adult neurosis is the continuation of a childhood neurosis, which was characterized by compulsive sexual desires and fantasies of a voyeuristic nature, described as "uncanny" (Freud 1909d, 163, 164). These were accompanied by terrible anxieties about his father's death. The boy tries to avert these fears by performing superstitious rituals that develop into the protective measures characteristic of the clinical picture of compulsive neurosis.

> The distressing affect was distinctly coloured with a tinge of uncanniness and superstition, and was already beginning to give rise to impulses to do something to ward off the impending evil. (Freud 1909d, 163)

The theoretical part of the case study devoted to the patient's relation to reality, superstition, and death contains many symptoms that

reappear in "The Uncanny" under the general heading "omnipotence of thought."[12] In some respects, the patient is a split personality. As in the case of the double, the different aspects of the personality are depicted as independent (Freud 1909d, 248). The Rat Man, usually quite rational, becomes very superstitious when under the spell of his compulsive ideas. In "The Uncanny" Freud recapitulates the story of "a patient" (i.e., the Rat Man) who ascribes his beneficial stay in a spa to a certain room, adjacent to that of a beloved nurse. When he returns there and the room turns out to be occupied, he wishes for the new occupant to die. When this actually happens, he attributes it to the "omnipotence of his thoughts" (Freud 1909d, 234–235) and characterizes it as an "'uncanny' experience" (Freud 1919h, 239). The quotation marks in Freud's text indicate that Freud borrows the word from his patient.

A second distinctive feature of obsessive-compulsive neurosis discussed in "The Uncanny," odd coincidences and premonitions, also have their pendant in the case study of the Rat Man where Freud uncovers the mechanisms behind these premonitions—mostly the patient fabricates them himself—and relates them to the specificity of the process of repression in this disorder. Repression here does not take the form of total amnesia; it consists of the disengagement of causal connections through the withdrawal of affects and representations.[13] However, since repression never fully succeeds, part of the cautionary, admonitary force is projected outside of the ego in the form of superstitions (Freud 1909d, 231).

Third, the patient's doubtful attitude in general as well as in relation to specific themes such as paternal ancestry, length of life, life after death, and the reliability of memory bring to mind the idea of "intellectual insecurity" that Freud attributes to Jentsch as an explanation of the uncanny.[14] In the third part of "The Uncanny," Freud expresses reservations when he raises the (rhetorical) question: "And are we after all justified in entirely ignoring intellectual uncertainty as a factor, seeing that we have admitted its importance in relation to death?" (Freud 1919h, 247). Uncertainty in relation to death, both his own death and that of others (accidental or murder), preoccupies the Rat Man, and he often fantasizes about it as a solution to his problems. According to Freud, these doubts and the obsession with death arise from the fundamental conflict between love and hate or an ambivalence of feelings that characterizes the Rat Man's attitude toward his love-objects (Freud 1909d, 236–247). This love-hate ambivalence already colored his first object-love, the relationship with his father. The strong sadistic component of the patient's libido must be repressed by an over-accentuation of the loving component.

However, in the unconscious, the repressed hate remains active and as intense as the conscious, tender counterpart. Thus, doubt about his own affectionate sentiments infects his attitude: the patient feels he cannot trust his own feelings.

Freud extensively analyzes the Rat Man's "father complex," the Rat Man's first exemplary love object. When his father caught the little boy in the act of masturbation, he threatened him with castration.[15] (Freud 1909d, 204–209) The Rat Man intensely hates his father because, on top of the classical oedipal rivalry, the father acts as "Störer der Liebe" ("disturber of love," Strachey translates the phrase as "interference or interferer," Freud 1909d, 209) when he thwarts the boy's desire. This hatred is repressed and camouflaged by excessive love for the father, but it still expresses itself in the form of murderous thoughts and revenge fantasies, accompanied by fits of guilt and compulsive rituals. In accordance with the omnipotence of thought, the child and the neurotic adult attribute a special power to his thoughts. These beliefs are increased by the father's actual death, which is interpreted as a confirmation. In "The Uncanny," we encounter another father figure who is a "disturber of love" in the form of the hated Sandman (Freud 1919h, 231). In many ways, the analysis of "The Sandman," especially the long footnote (Freud 1919h, 232), reads like a case study of the main character Nathaniel's neurosis, also caused by an ambivalent attitude toward his father. The father figure is divided in a good and a bad father and subsequently materialized in different father-pairs (the actual father versus Coppelius and Spalanzani versus Coppola) that ultimately blur any simple dichotomy in terms of good-bad. Moreover, the theme of castration is also doubled in the recurrent motif of the eyes and in the scene where Coppelius unscrews Nathaniel's body.[16] The clinical picture of ambivalence is completed when Freud interprets Olympia as "nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father" and "a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person" (Freud 1919h, 232), which is the passive side of the Oedipus complex. In the end, there is hardly any difference between the short story and a regular case study:

> The psychological truth of the situation in which the young man, fixated upon his father by his castration complex, becomes incapable of loving a woman, is amply proved by numerous patients whose story, though less fantastic, is hardly less tragic than that of the student Nathaniel. (Freud 1919h, 232)

A similar reasoning can be found in "Dostoevski and Parricide" (1928b).[17] Like that of the Rat Man, Fyodor Dostoevski's hysterical epilepsy orginates in his castration complex and his ambivalent attitude toward his father. When the father is killed, the boy attributes this to his revengeful thoughts and is ridden with guilt. He identifies with his father and thus imagines his own death in the hysterical form of an epileptic fit. Dostoevski's attacks of mortal fear are a form of punishment of his sadistic superego, which is the internalization of his severe father (Freud 1928b, 184–187), In "The Uncanny," Freud considers epilepsy from a slightly different perspective. According to Jentsch (following a standard expression for this disease, *morbus sacer*), epilepsy is uncanny because it is considered to be "an illness deriving not from the human world, but from foreign and enigmatic spheres" (Jentsch 1995, 14). A confrontation with failures of the human mind, epilepsy, or other disorders and even with death causes the viewer to doubt his or her own faculties. Freud basically agrees: epilepsy is uncanny because it confronts us with the dark forces in ourselves.

> The uncanny effect of epilepsy and of madness has the same effect. The layman sees in them the working of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man, but at the same time he is dimly aware of them in remote corners of his own being. The Middle Ages quite consistently ascribed all such maladies to the influence of demons, and in this their psychology was almost correct. Indeed, I should not be surprised to hear that psychoanalysis, which is concerned with laying bare these hidden forces, has itself become uncanny to many people for that very reason. (Freud 1919h, 243)

In this passage, there is an interesting shift from the disease to the cure. In general, people do not like to be confronted with the sinister, uncontrollable forces of the unconscious. The image of psychoanalysis as uncanny is not limited to "The Uncanny." In "A Difficulty on the Path of Psycho-Analysis" (1917a) and in *The Question of Lay-Analysis* (1926e) we come across the same rhetoric when Freud suggests that mental illness in general is regarded as uncanny.

> Psychiatry, it is true, denies that such things mean the intrusion into the mind of evil things from without, beyond this, however, it can say with a shrug: "degeneracy, hereditary disposition, constitutional inferiority!" Psycho-analysis sets out to explain these uncanny disorders; it engages in care-

> ful and laborious investigations, devises hypotheses and scientific constructions until at length it can speak thus to the ego:—"Nothing has entered you from without, a part of the activity of your own mind has been withdrawn from your knowledge and from the command of your will." (Freud 1917a, 142)

The labelling of psychiatrists is but one step removed from the medieval attribution to demonic forces. By contrast, the psychoanalyst, in spite of great resistance, overcomes his primitive, superstitious fears and sets out to find a rational, scientific explanation for these conditions. (See also Freud 1926e, 137.)

2.3. From Compulsion to Taboo: The Surmounted Phylogenetic Origin of the Uncanny

The conception of the theory of the uncanny can be traced to 1913, just after the completion of *Totem and Taboo*.[18] Several of the studies cited by Freud in "The Uncanny" deal with motifs from primitive societies, mythology, and popular beliefs: Otto Rank's *The Double* (*Der Doppelgänger*) and Siegfried Seligmann's *The Evil Eye and related themes* (*Der böse Blick und Verwandtes*). The essay of course shares with *Totem and Taboo* the convergence of the axes of ontogeny (the development of the individual) and phylogeny (the development of society) centered around the cornerstones of ambivalence, castration, repression, narcissism, death, and art. *Totem and Taboo*, Freud's all-time favorite study, consists of four essays based on a curious blend of anthropological material and psychoanalytic ideas. From the perspective of "The Uncanny," the second and the third essay are the most important.

The second essay is devoted to the notion of taboo and ambivalence. It starts with an extensive annotated quote of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s definition, supplemented by and compared with the findings of Wilhelm Wundt. As in the elaborate dictionary research in "The Uncanny," which also emphasized the lexical ambivalence of the word "heimlich," Freud points out that one of the meanings of the ambivalent Polynesian word "taboo" is "unheimlich": "To us it means, on the one hand, 'sacred,' 'consecrated,' and the other 'uncanny,' 'dangerous,' 'forbidden,' 'unclean'" (Freud 1912–13, 18). The ambivalence of the word "taboo" is analogous to the Latin word "sacer"—sacred and damned—one of the prime examples in "The Antithetical Meanings of Primal Words" (1910e), a short piece on the theory of the linguist Karl

Abel.[19] According to Abel, it is common in primitive languages that words encompass their negation or their opposite (for instance "altus" means "high" and "deep," "sacer" means "sacred" and "accursed"). The ambivalence of the ancient languages disappeared in the course of development, but its traces can still be found in modern languages. Abel's research on linguistic ambivalence in ancient languages is used to corroborate Freud's hypothesis in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that the mechanisms of contradiction and negation do not operate in the unconscious and provides a link between onto- and phylogenesis.

A taboo is a strong power of extra-ordinary or quasi-religious nature, associated with certain people, things, or situations that must be kept under control by strict regulations and ceremonies. In accordance with the ambivalent register of the taboo, which encompasses the two poles of "sacred" and "impure," the reactions are equally ambivalent: "awe" and "disgust," attraction and repulsion. In the primitive, mythological phase of human development where the taboo originates, these seemingly paradoxical reactions are not yet separated. In fact, we are dealing with *one* dual response, not with two distinct conflicting attitudes. The specific psychoanalytic angle to the problem of taboo is derived from the analysis of obsessive-compulsive neurosis (the case of the Rat Man), which is also called a "taboo illness" (Freud 1912–13, 25). The symptoms of this disorder run parallel with the various aspects of the taboo in primitive society: the constant preoccupation with an object, the typical prohibition to touch, the obsessive rituals to ward off the threat that is attached to the prohibition, the mixture of pleasure and fear arising from the compulsive rituals and their transgression, and finally the contagiousness of the obsessions (which can be displaced from one object to another).

Contrary to Wundt's anthropological interpretation that the taboo is based on the fear of demons, Freud concludes in *Totem and Taboo* that demons in fact stem from the same source as the taboo: they are "projections of hostile feelings harboured by the survivors against the death" (Freud 1912–13, 62). Projection as a general mechanism of the primitive system entails that unconscious negative feelings are treated as if they come from the outside rather than from the inside. The first primitive perception system was directed toward the outside: what causes displeasure is treated as an alien, inimical object and is expulsed in the mechanism of projection. Only in a later stage, when the inner processes are connected with words, do they become more abstract and can be perceived by the system as coming from the inside. From that point onward, outside and inside are strictly distinguished. A strong example of projection is found the superstition of the "evil

eye" in "The Uncanny." The owner of a valuable object projects his own jealousy onto others and consequently fears their jealousy. This fear is attached to the glance, for looking at someone else's goods is symbolically equivalent to touching them.[20] In "The Uncanny" Freud concentrates on the second component of the superstition: the evil intentions that are ascribed to someone reach such intensity that they are considered harmful in reality according to the mechanism of the "omnipotence of thought."[21]

Both projection and omnipotence of thought are part of the first primitive conception of the world, animism. Anything that reminds modern man of this surmounted phase is experienced as uncanny.

> It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving some residues or traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression. (Freud 1919h, 240–241)

This concise formulation summarizes the main elements of the third essay of *Totem and Taboo*. The conception of animism allowed the primitive man to situate himself and to interpret the world as animated with good and evil spirits. Living beings (humans, animals, and plants) as well as inanimate objects have a spirit or soul. In "The Uncanny," Freud coins the phrase "*Menschengeistern*" (spirits of human beings) to emphasize the human origin of the spirits, which are projections of positive and negative feelings, shaped according to the model of the human soul. One of the most extreme instances of this mechanism is the double, which is a projection of the self that has become independent. Confronted with the inescapable yet inconceivable fact of death, primitive man solved the dilemma by discriminating between the inner world of his thoughts, the immortal soul, and its temporary container, the body, which are separately incarnated in the double.

The primitive stage of animism, with its characteristics of ambivalence, projection, and omnipotence of thought, is the phylogenetic equivalent of narcissism, the primitive stage in infantile development. This is the intermediary stage between autoeroticism and object-love, when the ego itself is invested with libido. Different stages succeed each other but not without leaving traces. The advent of a new stage does

not entail the complete disappearance of the preceding one. Omnipotence of thought, also called "intellectual narcissism," forms the basis of all social development. As intellectual constructions become more and more sophisticated, the primitive must renounce the direct erotic satisfaction attached to the overestimation of the power of his thoughts and the mechanism of projection.[22] Mind and world are separated; the internal pleasure principle is subjected to the demands of reality. This goes hand-in-hand with the more solid extension of culture, fuelled by desexualized libido that is channelled to non-sexual, cultural goals and that secures long-term attachments.[23]

The dualistic conception of animism is a direct consequence of the ambivalence that characterizes the primitive mind as well as its language (Freud 1912–13, 92). Primitive man was so proud of his invention of language that he attributed magic powers to the word. Language is thus the first defense mechanism of man against nature, resulting from the overestimation of his intellectual powers. The animistic dualistic conception allowed primitive man not only to understand the world as a projection of his own psyche but also to influence it through the techniques of magic and telepathy, based on the supremacy of the inner world over outer reality. In "Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy" (1940d) and in lecture 33 of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933a) devoted to "Dream and Occultism," Freud studies telepathy as an archaic form of communication. In the course of evolution, it has gradually been replaced by more effective communication through signs, but it can under certain conditions be reactivated. When this occurs, a surmounted belief is reconfirmed and uncanniness arises.[24]

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud also proposes a theory of art as a phylogenetic phenomenon. In accordance with the wish-fulfilment in dreams, art offers the adult temporary compensation for his sacrifices through the phantasmatic satisfaction of forbidden impulses. The power to do so is related to the mechanism of the omnipotence of thought.[25]

> In one single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thought been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces the emotional effects—thanks to the artistic illusion—just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the "magic of art" and compare artists to magicians. [. . .] There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's

> sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct to-day. And among them we may suspect the presence of magic. (Freud 1912–13, 90)

In the third part of "The Uncanny" Freud claims that the strict rules of reality do not apply in fiction. The writer is in complete control and can manipulate the fictional world at will. The predominance of the pleasure principle over the reality principle in fiction is consistent with his earlier analysis of literature in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908e), where Freud first expressed his fascination for the mystery of the creative power of the artist (Freud 1908e, 143). His explanation at that time was a mixture of a psychoanalytic and an aesthetic interpretation. Fantasy is related to the daydream and governed by wish fulfillment: via the figure of the hero, as a pawn of the ego, both author and reader can satisfy their hidden, unconscious desires and achieve a kind of catharsis. In this text Freud also acknowledges the role of the aesthetic aspect of artistic creation. According to the mechanism of forepleasure, genuine aesthetic pleasure is derived from the beauty or skill of the writing. This "higher," more accepted form of enjoyment allows for a weakening of the censor. In this way, a deeper, more primitive gratification of unconscious desires is made possible, as a kind of catharsis. The function of aesthetic pleasure is opposite to the censor mechanism of the dream: it allows for the return of the repressed in a safe way, even in the ambivalent form of the uncanny.

In "The Uncanny" this mechanism is not mentioned, although Freud repeatedly suggests that the uncanny in art exceeds the grasp of psychoanalytic inquiry and should be studied by aesthetics. When the essay is read within the framework of a phylogenetic theory of art, the peculiar power of the writer to create or suppress uncanny effects that fascinates Freud is situated on a more primitive level. The power of language and fantasy is reminiscent of magic and the fictional world can be seen as a projection. The complex etymology of the word uncanny is, as it were, an emanation of the ambivalence connected with the primitive mind, and it elevates the notion of "aesthetic" to a more general realm of the affect, rather than "artistic" or "literary." In this light, the decision of the editors of the *Studienausgabe* not to follow Freud in considering the essay as primarily an essay on literature makes sense.[26]

In the years following *Totem and Taboo*, Freud kept examining remnants of the primitive phase of human development in literary and mythological motifs as well as in everyday life. Many of these

reappear in "The Uncanny": superstitions, premonitions, strange repetitions and coincidences, the evil eye, the double, the *Gettatore,* the sudden animation of lifeless objects (the *Strand*-story and the Pygmalion-motif). In two earlier small texts, we get the same blend of literary motifs and mythology. In "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913f), Freud discusses the Shakespearian motif of a man who must choose between three women (King Lear and his daughters) or three objects (the boxes that represent Portia in *The Merchant of Venice)* as a transformation of a similar motif in the classical myths of the three Fates and of Paris's judgment. The third, most desirable yet somehow uncanny sister (or goddess), symbolically represents death. The motif of the choice in Shakespeare's plays and in the Paris-myth is interpreted as a reversal of the ultimate inescapable fate of man, death. The transformations reveal the fundamental ambivalence at the core: the motif is a symbolic representation of the evolution of the mother-imago as the most important woman in a man's life, from birth giver to wife to death (1913f, 301). The circular movement of birth and death and the ambivalence of desire and death related to the mother will turn up again in yet another form in "The Uncanny," in relation to the uncanny perception of female genitalia.[27]

In "The Taboo of Virginity" (1918a), the taboos surrounding defloration in primitive culture are examined.[28] Taking a woman's virginity in primitive culture incites a mixture of attraction and fear:

> The apprehensions will appear most strongly on all occasions which differ in any way from the usual, which involve something new or unexpected, something not understood or uncanny. (Freud 1918a, 197)

However, the uncanniness of the situation is not just limited to the Jentschean sense of the word; the foundation lies deeper. The taboo originates in the projection of a sense of danger arising from the primitive's belief in the omnipotence of thought (Freud 1918a, 200). As was the case with the evil eye, the primitive is afraid that the woman's feelings of spite and disappointment after the defloration will be translated into action: the husband fears that the wife will seek revenge by castrating him. This fear stems from the primordial source of uncanniness, the return of repressed castration anxiety.[29]

A short essay that has often been linked to "The Uncanny" is Freud's note on "The Medusa Head" (1940c).[30] The snakes on the Medusa's head are interpreted as a protection against castration anxiety by the multiplication of the phallus. The petrifying effect of the Medusa

is both a result of fear and a protection against castration anxiety because the act of becoming rigid or erect represents the phallus. On the other hand, the Medusa is also a symbol of the female genitalia. Its protective function on Athena's shield (and in the work of François Rabelais) is due to an "apotropaeic" effect. As was pointed out in "The Uncanny," female genitalia evoke fright, therefore they may serve as a weapon: "What arouses horror in oneself will produce the same effect upon the enemy against whom one is seeking to defend oneself" (Freud 1940c, 274).

All these essays dealing with mythological and literary motifs are interchangeable in terms of generic categorization. This characteristic, which they share with "The Uncanny," confirms the fundamental interrelatedness of the phylo- and the ontogenetic approaches. Culture develops according to the same mechanisms at work in the development of the child. Hence, it is not fruitful to strictly distinguish between surmounting primitive stages and repressing infantile complexes, as Freud is well aware: "When we consider that primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them, we shall not be greatly astonished to find that the distinction is often a hazy one" (Freud 1919h, 249). In the final analysis, it does not matter whether a topic belongs to individual or collective psychology, nor does it make a difference whether Freud is dealing with pathology or with phenomena from daily life, with anthropological data or with superstitions, with mythology or with literature. Psychoanalysis ultimately aims at the processes or the machinery behind certain phenomena and shifts.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud is mainly interested in the origin and development of society from a more anthropological-mythological perspective. Already in 1919, but very noticeably after 1921, his attention shifts to social problems and to the "maturity" of civilization. One of the impulses that triggered this change of perspective was clearly World War I, which is questioned directly in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915b) but which also indirectly influenced the main changes of his theory through the importance of repetition in traumatic neurosis, aggression, mass phenomena, etc.[31] *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921c) picks up the thread from *Totem and Taboo*. The examinations of the nature of the bond between a mass and a *Führer* (whether military or religious) and of the specific change of behaviour when individuals are united in a group are now focused on the contemporary circumstances rather than displacing attention to primitive societies.[32] Key concepts in the analysis of narcissism—ambivalence, identification, and idealization—are applied to

the myth of the slaying of the father and the totem meal coined in the final chapter of *Totem and Taboo*.

Mass formation is an inherited mechanism that goes back to the primal herd. The leader is the equivalent of the primal Father, the members of the mass are the brothers united under his authority. Since the father imposes sexual abstinence, the sons are tied by inhibited drives and by homosexual tendencies. In contemporary masses—i.e., the Church and the army—the leader incarnates the unattainable loved ideal and the mass's cohesion is ensured by sublimation. Because mass formation is a surmounted mechanism, it resuscitates in modern man primitive modes of thought and is thus easily experienced as uncanny. In accordance with the equivalence posited between the taboo and obsessive-compulsive neurosis in *Totem and Taboo*, "uncanny" and "compulsive" are used as synonyms.

> The uncanny and coercive characteristics of group formation, which are shown in the phenomena of suggestion that accompany them, may therefore with justice be traced back to the fact of their origin from the primal horde. The leader of the group is still the dreaded primal father; the group still wishes to be governed by unrestricted force; it has an extreme passion for authority. (Freud 1921c, 127)

The uncanniness of mass formation is related to the phenomenon of hypnosis, which has "something positively uncanny about it; but the characteristics of uncanniness suggest something old and familiar that has undergone repression" (Freud 1921c, 125). The strange magnetism exerted the hypnotist on the hypnotized is of the same nature as the source of the taboo attached to rulers or bearers of power in primitive society. As in the case of the evil eye, the glance as a way of captivating is the locus of this magic power.

In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939a), Freud traces the psychohistory of religion and critically examines its role in society. Freud displaces his attention and returns to ancient history, concentrating on the origins of both Judaism and Christianity. Whereas *Totem and Taboo* was to a large extent based on the analogy of the primitive with obsessive-compulsive neurosis, *Moses and Monotheism* compares the genesis of Jewish religion with traumatic neurosis. The trauma of the murder of Moses was followed by a period of latency, during which a collective neurosis develops, which is at once a disease and an attempt to repair the trauma of the parricide. The Jewish sense of guilt is a typical expression of the return of the repressed (the murder of the

father), as is Paulus's Christian idea of the original sin. Christianity is at once a continuation of the Jewish religion and a step back. The sacrifice of Christ, God's son and a tragic hero, is an expression of the wish to atone for the original sin and a demonstration of the repetition compulsion that doubles the Jewish people's guilt with a second murder of the Messiah (Freud 1939a, 88). According to Freud, Christianity is more attractive to the masses because it returns to a primitive stage of religious development.[33] Moreover, anti-Semitism is also motivated by the fact that the Jews are accused of the murder of Jesus, for which they do not show remorse, and by the diaspora that has set them apart. A deeper reason, based on infantile complexes, is the high self-esteem resulting from the feeling of being chosen and favored by the Father, which provokes jealousy. Finally, the custom of circumcision "has made a disagreeable, uncanny impression, which is to be explained no doubt, by its recalling the dreaded castration and along with it a portion of the prehistoric [urzeitlichen] past which is gladly forgotten" (Freud 1939a, 91, trans. modified).[34]

2.4. The Uncanny and Theoretical Revisions

If "The Uncanny" reflects the evolution in Freud's thinking about phylogeny, the essay is most acclaimed as the forerunner of several important theoretical or metapsychological innovations in Freud's theory.

> The passages dealing with the "compulsion to repeat" (p. 234ff.) must in any case have formed part of the revision. They include a summary of much of the contents of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g) and speak of it as "already completed." (Freud 1919h, 218)

Freud's first metapsychological conception of the psyche is a spatial model (or *Topik*) that distinguishes between three systems: the unconscious (Ucs), the preconscious (Pcs), and the conscious (Cs). In all three systems, contents and representations are cathected with drive energy or libido, which is mobile and can be displaced. It is the intensity of their charge or cathexis, and the quantity of energy (economical perspective) combined with their place in the system, that determines the way in which and the force with which certain impulses strive for discharge and how the conflicting dynamics work in the whole of representations. Hence, not only in unconscious processes such as

repression and return of the repressed, but also in conscious processes like thinking and attention, the libido attached to representations can be shifted and displaced, reinforced, or withdrawn.

Although the Ucs is latent and therefore, from a phenomenological perspective, unknowable, psychoanalysis has, mainly through the analysis of dreams and hysteria, found a way to *translate* the Ucs in conscious terms. The characteristics of the Ucs—absence of negation and temporality and the primacy of psychical reality over outer reality—on the one hand testify to the strength of the Ucs: representations in the Ucs are present in a "pure" or undiluted form. On the other hand, they are also negative: the un-conscious and its representations must be understood as a denial of the characteristics of conscious representations. The Ucs contains only "thing-representations," whereas the Cs (containing the functions of thought and perception) consists of the combination of thing-representations and word-representations. Words are necessary for the conscious activity of thought. When Freud says in "The Uncanny" that "the prefix '*un*' ['un-'] is the token of repression" (Freud 1919h, 245), he means that *heimlich* and *unheimlich* are the same, because the Ucs knows no negation in the existential sense, 'un-' merely indicates that something is not conscious. The *unheimliche* always remains 'at home' in the unconscious.

It has often been remarked that Freud produces a seemingly never-ending stream of images and motifs in his attempts to grasp the uncanny. This is consistent with a conception of the uncanny as an essentially unconscious phenomenon. However, as a sensation in the system consciousness-perception, the nature of the uncanny is the *return* of the repressed. What happens, then, is the sudden revelation of a remote memory trace—the remainder not of the repressed thing in itself, but of the trace of its movements in the Ucs—which forms a connection with a recent image or experience in the Cs.[35] The unconscious thing-representations are not actual or accurate representations of things; it is perhaps more appropriate to call them the "ghosts" of things. Because the connection with the eliciting perception in the present is not clear, the Pcs fails to establish a connection with a word-representation and the repressed can neither become fully conscious, nor be effectively be repressed anew. As a result, the affect, which was separated from the content in the process of repression (Freud 1915e, 179), is discharged in the form of a vague, free-floating form of anxiety. The uncanny has more to do with the *experience* of the process of repression and the return of the repressed than with the content of repression. In that sense, one must agree with Cixous—even though she underpins her conclusion with a rhetorical rather than a

metapsychological argument—that any attempt to describe and to pin down the uncanny is destined to fail, because there are no (linguistic) images for thing-representations (see Chapter 4).

In the first model, the energy that must be postulated to account for an animated or living organism comes from the drives ("Triebe," James Strachey translates this as "instincts") that fuel the development, preservation, and protection of the psyche. From a biological point of view, the drives must be situated on the border between the somatic and the psychical. What is commonly called "drive" is in fact the psychical representative of the drive. Freud distinguishes two primary groups of drives, from which a multitude of commonly distinguished drives can be derived: the ego- or self-preservation drives and the sexual drives. The main principle governing the psyche and the unconscious primary processes is the pleasure principle. Freud conceives of pleasure as the discharge of nervous tension, whereas displeasure (*Unlust*) is a rise of tension in the organism. According to the pleasure principle, the organism strives to avoid displeasure by trying to discharge as many impulses as possible. The pleasure principle is gradually turned into the reality principle when it is confronted with demands, dangers, and limitations imposed by reality. The activities of dreaming, fantasizing, and art will offer a way out of the demands of reality and provide a hallucinatory, internal satisfaction.

Since the sexual drives are responsible for nearly all neurotic disorders, their effects are most frequently observed. Because the sexual drives are mobile, they can shift from one organ to another—this is what happens in the various phases of development (oral, anal, and genital)—before turning outward to the object during the Oedipal phase. Moreover, they undergo modifications that underlie the most important psychical mechanisms: reversal into the opposite, turning against the proper person, repression, and sublimation. The process of reversal is responsible for the omnipresent notion of ambivalence, which is crucial for an understanding of the uncanny. It can take two forms: first, an active drive can become passive, in other words the drive can turn against the self as in the antonym pairs of sadism/masochism, voyeurism/exhibitionism, and loving/being loved (or narcissism). Second, there is the more complex case of reversal of the content of the drive, love turning into hate. Here the goal is changed and not the object. It is not uncommon in pathology and in "normal" individuals that both opposing tendencies coexist. This is indicated with the term "ambivalence" borrowed from Eugen Bleuler, who used it in three senses: affective ambivalence (the fluctuation of love and hate), ambivalence of the will (the inability to act), and intellectual ambivalence or doubt.[36]

In "Instincts and their vicissitudes" (1915c) Freud relates the ambivalence resulting from the concomitance of an active drive impulse and its passive counterpart to the development of the drive and to the realm of phylogeny (Freud 1915c, 131). The passage sheds light on the ambivalence of the double in "The Uncanny." The fear of the double is caused by the reversal of an active drive into its opposite (protection turns into threat) and by the drive turning against the proper person. However, if the double is a protection against the loss of the self, it seems that we are not dealing with a sexual drive but with the ego-drive. This is not a simple matter in light of the first drive theory. From a theoretical point of view, it is necessary that the ego drives are inflexible and cannot be postponed or reversed, as this would threaten the existence of the ego. The hypothesis that the ambivalence of the double results from a reversal of the ego drives is therefore untenable. Freud's first drive theory has trouble accounting for the ambivalence of the double, hatred against the self and other phenomena announced in "The Uncanny" such as the repetition compulsion and death.

The term "repetition compulsion" first turns up in the essay "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" (1914g) in the context of the psychoanalytic cure where patients often do not (consciously) remember what is repressed, even though they repeat it in their behaviour. In "The Uncanny," the repetition compulsion is picked up in a more general context. Among the uncanny motifs discussed in connection with Hoffmann's novel *The Devil's Elixirs* is the "repetition of the same thing" (Freud 1919h, 236). Freud substantiates his discussion of this motif with a number of personal anecdotes: his getting lost and wandering around in circles in an Italian red-light district (a popular topic for feminist critiques), a sense of uncanniness when he repeatedly encounters the number 62 (which happens to be Freud's age around the time of writing), and the name Ewald Hering (a physiologist whose work he was studying for *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). He attempts to explain these phenomena in the same manner as the double but settles the case with a dense preview of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*

> How exactly we can trace back to the infantile psychology the uncanny effect of such similar recurrences is a question that I can only touch on in these pages; and I must refer the reader instead to another work, already completed, in which this has been gone into in detail, but in a different connection. For it is possible to recognize the dominance

> in the unconscious of a "compulsion to repeat," proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts—a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expressed in the impulses of small children; a compulsion, too, which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. All these considerations prepare us for the notion that whatever reminds of this inner "compulsion to repeat" is perceived as uncanny. (Freud 1919h, 238)

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud analyzes the phenomena alluded to here. The compulsive nature of repetition in traumatic neurosis and in the psychoanalytic cure and the enigmatic pleasure that children derive from the continuous repetition of the same lead Freud to conclude that we must be dealing with a very primitive, drive-related mechanism. In contrast to his earlier description of the drives as the motor of change and progress, he now states that the main character of the drives is their conservative nature: "*the aim of all life is death*, and, looking backwards, that *inanimate things existed before living ones*" (Freud 1920g, 38).

The question of whether death is inherent in the organism or caused by external factors had occupied Freud for a long time already. In "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," Freud studied death primarily from a phylogenetic perspective. In accordance with the first topic, he posits that the unconscious cannot represent its own death because the unconscious doesn't know negation (Freud 1915b, 289, 298–299). Mortal anxiety is in fact a disguised feeling of guilt for murderous thoughts toward others, which are the result of the fundamental ambivalence of love and hate that characterizes the relation to the object.[37] In "The Uncanny" Freud singles out death as the strongest source of uncanniness because in relation to death modern man remains closest to the overtly ambivalent attitude of the primitive.

> There is scarcely any other matter, however, upon, which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as our relation to death. Two things account for our conservatism: the strength of our original emotional reaction to

> death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge of it. Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but perhaps avoidable thing in life. (Freud 1919h, 241–242)

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* we get the results of a profound study of biological and philosophical literature on the problem of death (Hering and Arthur Schopenhauer). Moreover, separate thematic clusters such as sadism and masochism, the ambivalence that characterizes the relation to the object, the tendency to keep the energy level of the psyche constant at the lowest possible level, and the repetition compulsion are integrated in a larger perspective that necessities a radically different conception of the drives. Rather than the opposition between ego-drives and libido, a new drive group is opposed to *Eros*, the revised name for the sexual drives or libido that strive for union and the prolongation of life: the death drives by contrast strive for the zero-reduction of tension, a return to the original inorganic state.

The modification of the drive theory leads to a revision of the topical model of the psyche in *The Ego and the Id* (1923b), no longer in spatial terms, but in terms of three instances: the *ego* (which is only partly conscious, partly unconscious), the *id* (more or less overlapping with the unconscious from the first topic), and the *superego* (also unconscious). This third instance is the elaboration of the studies on narcissism (1914c) and on mourning and melancholia (1917e) that deal with the primary and constitutive mechanisms of idealization and identification. In the oral phase, the infant protects itself against the sudden loss of the object (mother or parents) by incorporating the object in the ego. Thus, the object becomes a part of the ego and constitutes the basis of the ego-ideal. This instance functions as the motif of repression (deciding what can be allowed and what not) and as *Ersatz* for the abandoned blissful state of primary narcissism (Freud 1914c, 93–94). On the negative side, it acts as censor and judge, punishing the ego when it falls short of the projected ideal. On the positive side, the ego-ideal encourages the ego's development by presenting a model to strive for, fed by the expectations and ideals of parents, educators, and society. The process involves considerable ambivalence. Since the mechanism of incorporation follows the path of the cannibalistic or oral drive (according to the model of eating), it entails a destruction of the object. The ambivalence of the first identifications during the oral phase is furthermore reinforced by the ambivalence of any love

or object relation shaped by the Oedipal experience as a complex junction of divergent attachments and identifications. On the one hand, the boy desires the mother (he wants to *have* her) and sees the father both as his model (he wants to *be* like him) and as his main opponent. On the other hand, because of the original bi- or multi-sexuality (children are "polymorphously perverse," i.e., their sexuality is not biologically attached to a privileged, heterosexual object), the boy also adopts a passive-feminine attitude toward his father and wants to be possessed by the father, like the mother who is the child's rival in this scheme.[38] Thus, the ambivalence of the superego originates in a series of complex identifications that exert influence in two opposite directions at the same time—encouragement, attraction to elevated goals, and reward, versus punishment, aggression, and cruelty—and that ultimately betray the underlying conflicting tendencies of Eros versus the death drives.[39]

"The Uncanny" presents a missing link in the development of the ego-ideal into the separate instance of the superego in the mechanism of the double and of splitting, which is based on the projection of conflicts between ego, id, and superego as separate instances.

> The idea of the "double" does not necessarily disappear with the passing of primary narcissism, for it can receive fresh meaning from the later stages of the ego's development. A special agency is slowly formed there, which is able to stand over against the rest of the ego, which has the function of observing and criticizing the self and of exercising a censorship within the mind, and which we become aware of as our "conscience." (Freud 1919h, 235)

The double not only incarnates the superego in its ambivalent function of censor and reservoir of ideals and unrealised potential, he may also embody the repressed contents of the id and reveal the way in which the ego is in fact governed by the allies id and superego. What appears to be "Free Will" or consciousness are in fact nothing but unconscious wishes and phantasms that compulsively drive the ego in its actions.[40] Moreover, the case of the double also reveals how the death drives that threaten the existence of the individual are partly neutralized by the entanglement with erotic drives. The death drives mixed with Eros are related to a narcissistic representation that is identical to the ego. They are partly projected outward in the form of aggression, from where they can return to the subject (Freud 1923b, 52–55).[41]

2.5. The Uncanny and Anxiety—I

In the classificatory opening remarks of "The Uncanny," Freud clearly marks the uncanny as a specific type of anxiety: the uncanny "is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" (Freud 1919h, 219). It is all the more remarkable that the phenomenon is not explicitly treated in his writings on anxiety.[42] A first hint about the position of the uncanny in the theory of anxiety can be derived from the fact that Freud characterizes the uncanny as one of the "subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics" (Freud 1919h, 219). The experience of the uncanny confronts Freud with the paradoxical fact that people can actually derive aesthetic pleasure from a sensation of anxiety. From the perspective of anxiety, we are dealing with a weak, basically harmless form of the affect that contradicts the signal function of anxiety. It is nevertheless remarkable that Freud does not foreground this relative mildness when he formulates his first preliminary definition. On the contrary, in the first of the two essential remarks that summarize his views on the uncanny; one even gets the impression that the uncanny is a prototypical form of anxiety because it reveals the intimate relationship between anxiety and repression.

> In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things, there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny; and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was originally frightening or whether it carried some *other* affect. (Freud 1919h, 241)

The uncanny is not just explained as affect-transformation, rather the uncanny reveals the process of repression—which produces anxiety—in reverse, as the return of the repressed. This aspect is in fact related to the content of the repression rather than to the concomitant affect.

As a prototype of the relationship between anxiety and repression, the uncanny marks a transition from Freud's first theory of anxiety to the second theory, in which anxiety is no longer seen as the effect of repression but as the cause. Early on in his career, Freud was confronted

with the problem of anxiety, but the scattered allusions and treatments of different aspects of anxiety were not brought together until 1917. Anxiety is an affect, which consists of three parts: physical stimuli or reactions, feelings that determine the basic "tone" of the affect, and finally reminiscences or repetitions. Like the hysterical attack, the affect is a product of reminiscences. What is repeated in the affect must be situated on the phylogenetic level (the development of species) rather than on the level of ontogenesis (the development of the individual) because, paradoxically, the highly subjective and individual experience of the affect or emotion is universal. Freud posits that the physical reactions of anxiety (breathing and palpitations) indicate that what is repeated is the act of birth. The original anxiety was a toxic reaction to a life-threatening situation, the expulsion from the womb through the narrow passage of the birth canal, which coincides with the first separation from the mother.[43]

The terminological spectrum of *Angst* (anxiety), *Furcht* (fear), and *Schreck* (fright) introduces a distinction on the basis of their relation to, or absence of, an object of fear. Freud furthermore distinguishes between real and neurotic anxiety. Real anxiety is a reaction to the perception of danger, coming from the outside world or reality. At first sight a rational and efficient reaction, real anxiety is an expression of the drive to self-preservation. In an argument similar to Jentsch's, Freud points out that the occurrence and degree of real anxiety depends on the knowledge of and sense of power over the world. The second category of anxiety, neurotic anxiety, can take several forms: anxiety neurosis (a general condition of worry and anxiety), phobia (bound to specific objects or situations, e.g., certain animals, confined spaces, open spaces, etc.), and finally the anxiety attack (no longer connected to a danger).

The two main questions raised in the theory concern the genesis of anxiety and the relation between real and neurotic anxiety. Freud resorts to clinical experience in order to show that neurotic anxiety arises from libido that is either diverted from its normal goal (i.e., sexual satisfaction in the case of anxiety neurosis and anxiety hysteria), or denied by the psychical instances (in the case of obsessive compulsive neurosis). In "The Uncanny," Freud repeats something that he pointed out earlier: any affect can turn into anxiety after repression.

> [. . .] we learn to our surprise that this affect accompanying the normal course of events is invariably replaced by anxiety after repression has occurred, no matter what its own quality may be. [. . .] Anxiety is therefore the universally

> current coinage for which *any* affective impulse is or can be exchanged if the ideational content attached to it is subjected to repression. (Freud 1916–1917, 403–404)

The main difficulty of this conception is the relationship between real and neurotic anxiety: what causes anxiety, and how can "normal" anxiety be distinguished from "pathological" anxiety?

Childhood anxiety is closely related to neurotic anxiety. The first anxieties of children (new situations, strange persons, the dark, being left alone, etc., also mentioned as sources of the uncanny) are first and foremost related to the separation from the first love object, i.e., the mother. When the mother is absent, libido, which at this early age primarily expresses itself as desire for the mother, becomes useless and is transformed into anxiety. The only difference between childhood anxiety and adult neurotic anxiety is the role of repression. In very young children, the conscious and the unconscious are not yet separated so the transformation of libido is an immediate process. In a later stage of development, the transformation of the affect is part of the process of repression (Freud 1916–1917, 410). In the process of repression, what is in fact repressed is an idea or representation (*Vorstellung*). It is displaced from the system of the conscious to the unconscious (topical process) but does not essentially change. However, an idea is always loaded with affects and the fate of these affects is completely different. Affects are discharge processes: according to the pleasure principle excessive tension causes displeasure and is discharged. Unlike ideas, affects are not merely transferred from one system to another; they are transformed. The result remains the same—discharge of tension—but because the idea to which they are attached is repressed, their tone changes.

According to Freud's first theory, anxiety is the result of affect-transformation in the process of repression; therefore, the mechanism must be situated in the unconscious. The problem with real anxiety is not spelled out here, but it is far reaching from a metapsychological perspective. When real anxiety is an expression of the drive to self-preservation, it must be situated in the ego; in other words, real anxiety stems from a different system than neurotic anxiety. This fundamental distinction is a serious complication that is necessary from a theoretical point of view, even though from a phenomenological perspective there is no difference between the phenomena. The theory is marred because the basic explanatory construction falls short of one of the basic requirements of scientific interpretation: economy.

In the second theory, it is no longer necessary to distinguish between real and neurotic anxiety because both are reactions that signal danger. Anxiety is in this view situated in the ego, as a defense mechanism, rather than in the id. The only distinction that is made is whether this danger is external or internal (Freud 1933a, 85). In keeping with the structural model of the psyche, Freud now distinguishes three kinds of anxiety according to the dependencies of the ego, id, and superego. However, the differences between these categories are far less radical than in the first theory. In this model, neurotic anxiety is no longer a by-product of the process of repression; it becomes the motor of repression. The ego responds to the impulses of the drives *in the same manner as if* they were external dangers.[44] One final component of the new theory of anxiety, trauma, and the repetition compulsion, is directly related to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and seamlessly links up the second theory with the first.[45]

The reason why the ego responds to the signal of danger by activating the mechanism of repression has to do with repetition and primary repression. In the first theory, Freud already indicated that the model for anxiety is the experience of birth. From 1926 onward, Freud qualifies this experience as the first trauma, the primary repression, which constitutes the oldest basis of the id. Strictly speaking, primary repression is not yet a repression, because in the neonate's psyche, there is no differentiation between ego and id, which is a necessary condition for repression *stricto sensu* (Freud 1926d, 135). However, the traumatic experience of birth—the borderline between psychology and physiology—provides the foundation of the later repetition of the affect of anxiety as a signal of danger. In later traumatic situations, the affect expresses itself according to the paths (*Bahnen*) that are set out by the experience of birth (Freud 1926d, 133).

Traumas are, as opposed to ordinary dangers, totally unforeseen confrontations with mortal danger. They derive their traumatic character from the utter helplessness of the ego, which echoes the physical immaturity and completely dependent state of the infant. This forms the basis for the reactivation of anxiety in a later similar situation as well as for the continuous repetition of the trauma in dreams and the concomitant mortal anxiety in traumatic neurosis, which serves a double purpose. Through the active reproduction of the trauma in a lesser form, the ego tries to actively prepare itself for future traumatic events on the one hand, and to come to terms and cope with the past, unforeseen traumatic situation that overtook the utterly helpless subject on the other hand (Freud 1926d, 166). Castration

anxiety and its pendant fear of the loss of love are the first actual repressions of a traumatic situation. They reproduce the helplessness of birth, since the child is defenseless against and cannot cope with the threat to his or her prized organ/object. Because these dangers must be situated in the phallic phase (as opposed to the trauma of birth in early infancy), the ego is already sufficiently differentiated from the id to actively repress contents that will be stored in the id with the other, "subject-less" and phylogenetic contents of primary repression (Freud 1926d, 146).[46] Moreover, Freud wonders whether castration anxiety may not be analogous to mortal fear, which plays a determinant role in traumatic neurosis.[47] In the experience of peril of life, the ego feels abandoned by God or Fate (the adult version of the protective father in childhood and a shape of the superego) and therefore is powerless. The experience of birth may also be imagined along the lines of castration: birth can be described in terms of a separation from the mother's body.[48] Furthermore, the (male) child narcissistically identifies with his penis, the phallus, and sees it as an instrument by means of which he will be able to return to womb (in the act of coitus) (Freud 1926d, 138, 1933a, 86–87). In this perspective—consistent with the uncanniness caused by the perception of female genitalia—castration comprises not only the fear of losing the phallus but also the ultimate frustration of the phantasm or desire to return to intra-uterine existence.

To sum up, according to Freud's second theory of anxiety, the seat of anxiety is the ego rather than the id. The ego produces anxiety as a signal to danger, which can come from reality, from the id, or from the superego (moral anxiety). In the case of neurotic anxiety, anxiety is the motor of repression. Castration anxiety and its counterpart, anxiety of object-loss, are the main causes of neurosis because they are traumatic repressions in the strict sense of the word. The reservoir of these repressed contents in the id attracts, in accordance with the repetition compulsion, new traumatic or illicit contents or impulses, which correspond to earlier repressed ones. In that way, the id helps the ego to fight off these harmful contents and impulses through the mechanism of repression. And yet, the id simultaneously undermines the ego, which originates in and remains part of the id, by continually forcing it to fixate the repressions. When the ego perceives that the unconscious contents and impulses are threatening to return to the ego, it gives the emergency signal of danger in the form of anxiety and renews the repression. However, since this process can only run at the cost of a tremendous expenditure of energy, it leaves the ego weakened—and prone to neurosis—in the long run.

In the first theory, it would be quite hard to classify the uncanny as real or as neurotic anxiety; it clearly belongs to both. The return of the repressed is conjured up by something in reality. In the second theory, the distinction between the two has to a large extent become meaningless, for anxiety always signals a threat that is experienced as real. The uncanny portends the return of the repressed as a minor danger—perhaps not yet really identified because the repressed impulse remains more unconscious than in the case of full-blown anxiety—reinforced by a perception in reality. In this sense, the uncanny could be seen as a defense mechanism against the production of anxiety. Provoking only a mild disturbance, the ego is not really alarmed. There is no need to set the repression machine in motion and run the risk of failure and actual reactivation of the repressed, which would cause genuine anxiety. Finally, this interpretation of the uncanny as a protection against anxiety can again be linked up to its privileged relationship with art. The uncanny can be pleasurable in art because it forestalls the danger as well as the satisfaction of forbidden impulses from deeper, unconscious sources. Accompanied and facilitated by other pleasures derived from art (the primary pleasure), this results in an overall pleasurable mixture of fear and delight.

2.6. The Uncanny: A Psychoanalytic Concept?

Most often acknowledged as a forerunner of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g), "The Uncanny" hovers between several psychoanalytic areas of research, mainly so-called applied psychoanalysis including psychoanalytic aesthetics, psychopathology of phenomena taken from daily life, and psychoanalytic theories of (the origin of) society, religion, and world view ("*Weltanschauung*") on the one hand; clinical psychoanalysis and metapsychology on the other hand. Especially within the latter domain, the essay occupies a pivotal position in the sense that it contains the kernels of major innovations in Freud's oeuvre. Crucial for the uncanny is the concept of repression and the return of the repressed. This fits in with the first theory of anxiety, according to which anxiety is the effect of repression, although the essay also introduces the second theory, according to which anxiety is the cause of repression. As we will see in the next chapter, it is Jacques Lacan, who in Seminar X, devoted to the theme of anxiety (*angoisse*) will incorporate the uncanny in the theory of anxiety.

This suggests that Freud considers the uncanny primarily as an aesthetic rather than a clinical phenomenon. He included the text in

a collection entitled *Literature and Art* (*Dichtung und Kunst*) but later it moved to a collection of "*Psychological Writings*."[49] Still, most critics feel that the core of "The Uncanny" is the extensive summary and interpretation of "The Sandman." The rather paradoxical combination of relative complexity and sophistication in the analysis with blatant mistakes and biases in the interpretation has given rise to countless combined readings of "The Uncanny," often in relation to Hoffmann's "Sandman," which since the 1970s became a tradition in itself (see Chapter 5). Then again, it is not certain that for Freud the distinction between literary or other sources really matters in his treatment of the story. The more general literary questions raised in the first and the third part broaden the essay's theoretical scope. How can literature or art evoke feelings other than those traditionally favored by aesthetics, i.e., the uncanny, fear, horror, and disgust? What is the nature of the author's power over the reader? How can the author transmit representations and affects from the deepest unconscious sources to the reader, and why can the same material generate such divergent, even opposite effects—uncanny or comical? These questions are related to earlier inquiries in which Freud examines the mystery of the creative power of the artist (Freud 1908). At that time, Freud claimed that writing, like dreaming, is a form of wish-fulfillment and that the material of the writer, commonly attributed to the imagination or fantasy, goes back to infantile sources. According to the theory of "forepleasure" ("Vorlust," Derrida and Cixous use the phrase "preliminary pleasure") or "incentive bonus" ("Verlockungsprämie," also translated as "bonus of seduction"), the formal or aesthetic pleasure of art facilitates the reader's satisfaction by weakening the censure mechanism, so that deeper lust from unconscious, repressed sources can be attained. Identifying with a hero, the reader can experience pleasure in the gratification of desires that would normally not be allowed.

The essay on the uncanny has in recent years primarily been considered as a supplement to Freud's essay on literary creation. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, it has been used as the basis for a theory of fiction, of writing and reading in terms of effect that allows one to integrate the second phase of Freud's theory, i.e., the death drives as a different source of energy beyond the pleasure principle, into the somewhat simplistic model of artistic creation and reception in terms of pleasure (libido or Eros), wish-fulfillment, and narcissism.

3

Preliminaries to Concept Formation

Before the actual conceptualization of the uncanny, there is a period that can be regarded as a stage of "preconceptualization" between 1919 and roughly the mid-1960s. It is not easy to locate all the sources from this period because many are not included in indexes, although Nobus has done a lot of work in his bibliographical repertory. Following leads from the references in texts supplemented the corpus for this period. The difficulty of finding sources corroborates that the work on the uncanny from this period has left surprisingly few explicit traces on later conceptualizations for various reasons. At second glance, however, we will see that certainly toward the end of this period indirect influences can be traced. A closer look at the discourse reveals that some of the material is intriguing and in some cases even visionary. The whole era can be considered as a period of conceptual latency. A number of tendencies begin to crystallize that will reveal their importance belatedly, when they are given one more turn of the screw.

At first, we see how the domains that were at the origin of Freud's essay, culture and the history of religion, still work through in the earlier psychoanalytic elaborations. Later on, there are attempts to explore other kernels in "The Uncanny," like anxiety. When the uncanny is applied to literary texts and brought into contact with other aesthetic concepts, the concept slowly moves into the domain of aesthetics and literary theory, which will provide the most fruitful breeding ground. Simultaneously, the uncanny's strong affiliation with the literary genre of the fantastic begins to take shape, even if some of the early theorizations of the genre in this period will later disappear from the canon. The question that arises from this material is of course difficult to answer: why did these early elaborations of the uncanny, in some cases more substantial than the key texts that will

be discussed in the following chapter, leave so few overt traces on the later conceptualization and canonization of the concept? At this point, we will also focus on instances of "stickiness" at work in the conceptualization, as well as on the growing, sometimes critical awareness of the uncanny as a concept toward the end of the 1950s.

3.1. Further Explorations of the Uncanny

In the years following the publication of Freud's essay, the interest in the subject fell back rather quickly, except for two noteworthy studies published soon after "The Uncanny" by collaborators on "The Uncanny." First, Rank's *The Double* (*Der Doppelgänger. Eine psychoanalytische Studie*), appeared in book form in 1925. In a footnote added to the book, Rank refers to Freud's essay for a further treatment of the ambivalence of the defense mechanism of the double (protection turning into threat).[1] Rank's study has remained a classic in the literature on the motif of the double, perhaps more so than Freud. Focusing only on the double, he founds his theory on a wide range of examples and inspired Freud's reading of the double in Hoffmann rather than having himself been inspired by "The Uncanny." Less well-known is Theodor Reik's study of religion, *The Strange God and One's Own God* (*Der eigene und der fremde Gott,* 1923). Reik (with his wife) assisted Freud with the research for "The Uncanny" and later became a prolific writer in his own right, covering a wide range of original topics, such as music, literature, masochism, etc. Reik's study is the earliest and most substantial application of the concept of the uncanny to the field of phylogenesis and the psychoanalytic study of religion.

The book is a rather heterogeneous collection of essays dealing with the dark, ambivalent sides of religion. The first part is devoted to the analysis of various Christian characters: Jesus, Mary, and Judas. According to Reik, the new Christian religion is formed in accordance with the rules of the repetition compulsion. Mary and Jesus are mirror images of old repressed deities: they appear strange but are in fact familiar. Mary is interpreted as the double of an old mother-goddess and Jesus as a revenant of her son and lover (Reik 1923, 56). Judas, the traitor—"one of the uncanniest [figures] in the world's history" (Reik 1923, 76, my trans.)—is interpreted through the mechanism of "ego-splitting," also used in the analysis of the double. This mechanism explains the representation of Judas as the uncanny double of Jesus in many artworks, cults, and religions. The ambivalence of Mary and the pair Jesus/Judas is a projection of a more general dualism of religion

and the ambivalence of God and Devil. The sensation of the uncanny is a remnant of the ancient fear of the devil; "hell" is interpreted as an uncanny reversal of the mother's womb and vagina.[2]

In the second part, Reik examines why strange gods, rituals, and cults, primitive religions or superstitions, and also the "own god" of the great monotheistic religions appear uncanny to "enlightened," rational, or atheist people. This is due to a "process of alienation" (Reik 1923, 180): not only does the deity remind us of an older stage of religious development but also certain religious customs, e.g., circumcision and the communion meal are uncanny because they remind us of infantile complexes. In Reik's view, the fundamental ambivalence characteristic of each stage of religion ultimately originates in the dualism of the drives. The mechanisms of splitting, doubling, and repetition explain the basic tendencies of religion. Essentially, all religions are based on the same principle. Religious identity is established and maintained through conflict and enmity. Religious intolerance, a fundamental characteristic of all strong religions, is due to the principle of "narcissism of small differences" (Reik 1923, 239)[3]: religions distinguish themselves by enlarging distinctive details.

Although Reik remains very close to Freud's insights in "The Uncanny" and announces some of Freud's later writings, Freud did not refer to Reik's book in his later work on religion, e.g., *Civilisation and its Discontents* or *Moses and Monotheism*. Reik's work is rarely mentioned in later writings on the uncanny (a notable exception is Todorov), and it will take a while before the Freudian uncanny has been (re)discovered as a useful conceptual tool for the study of religion by Wolfgang Zuse (1974), Lorne Dawson (1989), Diane Jonte-Pace (2001) and George Aichele (2005). In 1952, Theodor W. Adorno's characterizes "The Uncanny" as "a direct psychoanalysis of the occult" (Adorno 1994, 35) in his analysis of superstition, "The Stars down to Earth: The *Los Angeles Tribune* Astrology Column."[4]

Reik's inquiry into the dark, ambivalent sides of religion runs curiously parallel to a contemporary (even slightly earlier) notion of the uncanny in religious studies, Otto's "uncanny-daemonic" that has been related to the Freudian uncanny by Prawer 1963a, Tuzin 1984, and Dawson 1989. In *The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the Non Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine* (2004, translation of *Das Heilige*, [1917]), *mysterium tremendum* is a kind of awe in the encounter with transcendence. This ineffable, overwhelming experience also fascinates (*fascinosum*). Otto compares the feeling of the numinous-sacred to the uncanny-daemonic. The latter is a primordial feeling that lies at the origin of religious development.

> Its antecedent state is "daemonic dread" [. . .] a queer perversion, a sort of abortive off-shoot, the "dread of ghosts." It first begins to stir in the feeling of "something uncanny," "eerie" or "weird." (Otto 2004, 15)

The primordial dread of ghosts that is attached to the worship of daemons is elevated to a higher level in the worship of gods, but "these gods still retain as 'numina' something of the 'ghost' in the impression they make on feelings of the worshipper, viz. the peculiar quality of the 'uncanny' and 'awful' which survives with the quality of exaltedness and sublimity or is symbolized by means of it" (Otto 2004, 17). In other words, gods—including the monotheistic gods—retain an uncanny quality due to the animistic roots of the religious feeling. This view obviously runs parallel to Freud's notion of the return of surmounted beliefs, but this is mostly due to Otto and Freud's common reliance on the anthropological theories of Wundt. There are no indications that either Freud or Reik were familiar with Otto's work.

3.2. The Uncanny and Anxiety—II

The earliest clinical application of the uncanny (1934) by Edmund Bergler is a lengthy elaboration of Freud's essay in the light of the second theory of anxiety. The uncanny is an anxiety signal of the ego against a resuscitation of infantile omnipotence of thought and the aggression this entails. Thus, it is first and foremost a protective mechanism of the superego, but "the feeling of the uncanny may be secondarily *enjoyed as anxiety-pleasure* [*Angstlust*], and masochistically induced over and over again ('sexualization of the uncanny')" (Bergler 1934, 221). In a later article, "The Feeling of Uncanniness in Gambling" (1958), Bergler returns to the uncanny from a different perspective. He analyzes E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "Gambler's Luck" ("Spielerglück," from *Die Serapions-Brüder* (1821)) as a case study. Gambling is a safe area of make-believe (like catharsis in literature and theater) that allows for sadistic and masochistic impulses that constitute the heart of the sensation. Quite strikingly, Bergler opts for the term "uncanniness" rather than "the uncanny" and points out the attractiveness or thrilling qualities of the uncanny.

> The unconscious pleasure derived from uncanniness seemingly pertains to the aggressive connotation. Parallel with that pleasure, another may be discerned—that of masochism.

> It is the combination of the two that makes uncanniness so alluring. (Bergler 1958, 41)

Martin Grotjahn also offers a number of case studies of the uncanny, which he considers to be "a shocklike experience" (Grotjahn 1948, 57). Comparing the sensation of the uncanny to a religious experience, Leon Salzman (1954) notes that the uncanny may also signal a renewed integration of dissociated tendencies (i.e., love and hate).[5] This conception of dissociation is closely related to the clinical phenomena of doubling, depersonalization, derealization, alienation, and phantom sensations.[6]

All in all, these attempts to integrate the uncanny into clinical practice seem isolated and rather unsuccesful. This is confirmed by the fact that only in 1968 was the term included in a psychoanalytic lexicon for the first time by Ludwig Eidelberg. This early inclusion of the concept is explicitly motivated by Eidelberg's desire to initiate new concepts: "A term which is not presently in wide usage may become so in the near future" (Eidelberg 1968, xii). Like the case studies discussed above, Eidelberg's attempt was not immediately successful. In the lexicon of the *American Psychoanalytic Association* (Moore and Fine), "uncanny" is not included until 1990 and again in 1995 in Roland Chemama's *Dictionnaire de la psychanalyse*. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis do not list the term in any of the editions of their influential *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*.

The most radical discussion of "The Uncanny" in the context of Freud's theories of anxiety is Lacan's seminar on anxiety, the last seminar at the hospital Saint-Anne in 1962–1963.[7] The seminar occupies a special position in the conceptual history of the uncanny: officially, it has only been published by Miller as *Séminaire X*: *L'angoisse* in 2004, but considering the cult status of Lacan's teachings in French intellectual circles, it is not implausible that many intellectuals discovered "The Uncanny" in the wake of the seminar.[8] At the beginning of the seminar, Lacan emphasizes both the marginality of "The Uncanny" and its status as hidden treasure that in fact contains the essence of anxiety. At the end of his lesson of November 28, 1962, in a chapter that editor Jacques-Alain Miller entitled "From the cosmos to the *Unheimlichkeit*," Lacan asks his students to read "The Uncanny."

> For next week, I ask you to take the trouble of rereading, with this introduction that I give you, Freud's article on *Unheimlichkeit*. It's an article that I have never heard being commented upon, and of which nobody even seems to

> have perceived that it is the indispensable pivot to address the question of anxiety. In the same way that I approached the unconscious through the *Witz*, I will this year approach anxiety through *Unheimlichkeit.* The *unheimlich* is that what appears in the place where the minus-ϕ should be. Where it all starts from, in fact, is the imaginary castration, because there is no, and with reason, image of lack. When something appears there, that is then, if I can put it like this, the lack that becomes lacking. (Lacan 2004, 53, my trans.)

L'angoisse starts with a structural reformulation of Freud's theories of anxiety in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, in terms of the topology of desire and the mathematical figure of the cross-cap in the previous seminar on identification. In the course of the seminar, the focus becomes very encompassing: Lacan discusses many of Freud's case studies, a number of literary texts as well as contemporary psychoanalytic theories, especially from the British tradition (e.g., Margaret Little, Lucia Towers, Phyllis Greenacre, D. W. Winnicott). Moreover, he endows anxiety with a broader status by relating it to the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Heidegger, and to specific tenets of Judaism and Buddhism. In one of the clearest summaries of the seminar Moustapha Safouan describes *L'angoisse* as the broadest exploration of Lacan's notion "object a" in all its aspects: "from its derivation starting from the relation of the subject to the signifier, its different forms and their interrelations, its character of cause and its effect, or also its relation to the own body and to the specular image, as well as to affects, like pain and mourning" (Safouan 2001, 231, my trans.).

Without going into the details and intricacies of the entire seminar and its position in Lacan's theory, I will examine the position of the uncanny in his refiguration of anxiety. "The Uncanny" offers Lacan a key to the fundamental new insight in anxiety, namely that "anxiety may be without cause, but not without object" (Lacan 2004, 36). Specifically, the object of anxiety is a special kind of object that has not yet attained the status of an object, namely the "object a," which is also the ek-centric cause of desire. The way in which this object, situated outside of the realm of the Imaginary and of the Symbolic, is perceived is as in a nightmare or an apparition (Lacan 2004, 57). Whereas Freud took castration anxiety as the model for anxiety in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Lacan translates the threat of the absence of the phallus as the negative perception of the missing phallus or "–φ." This symbol indicates an imaginary castration that is not confirmed by perception. The phallus, which should be missing, is still

perceived as present: "the lack becomes lacking" and "it is always the it [id] is not lacking" (Lacan 2004, 53).[9] Anxiety is thus caused by the absence of castration rather than by castration itself. In the next lesson of the seminar, "Beyond castration anxiety," Lacan offers a reading of "The Uncanny" focusing on three main points.

Firstly, the etymology of the word: "it is the definition of the *unheimlich* to be the *heimlich.* This is what is at stake in the *Heim* which is *Unheim*" (Lacan 2004, 60). According to Lacan, *Heim* as a structural position is the place designated to –φ. It represents "the absence where we are." This is also the place of man in the realm of the Other, that is, beyond the image. The specular image that we perceive in the place of the Other, which renders our perception of ourselves as subject foreign or uncanny to us, is precisely the phallus that appears where it should be lacking, undoing the castration that is necessary to constitute us as divided subjects.

Secondly, Lacan analyzes Freud's readings of Hoffmann, first of all of "The Sandman."

> In the atrocious story of *The Sandman* one sees the subject bounce from captivation to captivation before this form of image that properly speaking materializes the ultra-reductive scheme that I give you of it here. The doll that the hero of the story spies on behind the sorcerer's window who conducts some kind of magic operation to her, is this very image, *i'(a)*, in the operation of completing it [i.e., the doll] by what is in the form itself of the story absolutely distinct from it, that is, the eye. The eye in question can only be that of the hero, since the theme that one wants to rob him of this eye offers the explicative thread to the entire story. (Lacan 2004, 60)

In Lacan's reading, the eye, as a substitute for the phallus, is the –ϕ that appears where it should be absent. Nathaniel *sees* his own eyes gazing back at him as radically separate from his body in his mirror image, the doll Olympia.[10] When Nathaniel's eyes are threatened by the Sandman, and later on, when he sees Olympia's bloody eyes on the ground in the fight with Spalanzani, he gets a hallucinatory confirmation in the Real both of the "imaginary dramatism" of his castration and of the ways it is undone. This is what causes his madness (Safouan 2001, 235–236). According to Safouan, Hoffmann's story reveals how castration, which is an effect of the father and the Symbolic order, inscribes itself on the body as –ϕ. Lacan's notion of

castration entails three things. First, it is the rupture in the image of the body (the imaginary idea of castration). Second, the symbolic threat of castration is intensified by the gap between the imaginary castration and the perception of the body: since the phallus is still there, castration remains an actual threat that can be executed. Third, castration signifies the phallus that appears on the body, on the place where the rupture should (have) occur(red), which has now become strange, unfamiliar, uncanny. This is the perception of the phallus on the place of $-\phi$ which belongs to the order of the Real: it exceeds representation and is the main source of anxiety.

Lacan also discusses Hoffmann's novel *The Devil's Elixirs* and the theme of the double and doubling. This story reveals not only that desire is always the desire of the Other and located *in* the Other but also "that my desire [. . .] enters in the cave where it is awaited for all eternity in the form of the object that I am insofar as it exiles me from my subjectivity, by resolving by itself all the signifiers to which my subjectivity is attached" (Lacan 2004, 61, my trans.). When the double takes on an independent existence from me, and moves and acts on its own, my subjectivity is radically questioned and alienated.[11] Later on in the seminar, Lacan will once more return to a Hoffmannian motif when describing the sudden surge of the uncanny in seeing that an inanimate object is animate: "Think that you have to do with the most peaceful desirable, in its most appeasing form, the divine statue that is only divine—what is more *unheimlich* than to see it animate itself, that is to say, to reveal itself desiring" (Lacan 2004, 314).[12]

The third point in Lacan's succinct notes on "The Uncanny" concerns the primary importance of fiction. Picking up on Freud's "bewilderment" on getting lost in Hoffmann's labyrinthine prose (Freud 1919h, 234), Lacan perceives that this experience is precisely what the uncanny is about: "In effect, to lose oneself is in itself part of the function of the labyrinth, that one seeks to animate" (Lacan 2004, 61). Fiction is capable of revealing the ghostly apprehension of the instances of the object *a* (the $-\phi$, the double), not merely because it can capture it as an experience but also as an effect.

> It is not for nothing that Freud insists on the essential dimension that the field of fiction gives to our experience of the *unheimlich*. In reality, this dimension is too fleeting. Fiction shows it a lot better, *even produces it as effect* in a much more stable way because better articulated. It is a kind of ideal point, but how precious for us, because this

> effect permits us to see the function of the phantasm. (Lacan 2004, 61, my italics)

Lacan compares the status of *Heim* to the objet *a*: "there is in effect something of the order of the *a* that appears in the place under the image *i'(a)* that I indicate to you on the blackboard, place of the *Heim*, that is the place of the appearance of anxiety" (Lacan 2004, 63). The object *a* that motivates desire is imaginarily constructed in the phantasm as a remainder. It remains out of reach because it is a phantasmatic construction. Like the symptom, the phantasm allows the neurotic "to defend himself against anxiety, to recover anxiety."

Thus, Lacan toys with Freud's idea that castration anxiety is the model of different types of anxiety turning it into various directions: "It is not about the loss of the object, but about the presence of it, that the objects, it does not lack. [. . .] what is feared is success, it is always the *it is not lacking*" (Lacan 2004, 67). The real threat to the subject is not so much the idea of castration as the idea of undoing castration, the fulfillment of desire, the idea of a reality that would correspond to the imaginary notions of object *a* and *Heim*. The importance of hallucination and the lack of castration also suggest that Lacan's prototypical scene of anxiety is situated in the realm of psychosis rather than neurosis. Still, the seminar is not limited to one type of anxiety but tries to graps the dynamics of the subject in different types of anxiety.

In a reading of the Wolf Man's dream and the picture of the wolves in a tree, in a case study dealing with phobia, in the chapter devoted to "What does not deceive" ("Ce qui ne trompe pas"), Lacan draws attention to the occurrence of the word "unheimlich" in the text and associates the notion of *Heim* with the secret (*Geheimnis*). These associations substantially broaden the scope of "unheimlich," infusing it with Heideggerian conceptions of anxiety and *Unheimlichkeit* as Bernard Baas suggests.[13] Without explicitly referring to the dimension of the Real, which is especially elaborated in the second phase of his teachings, Lacan describes how the uncanny and anxiety open up an impossible dimension of the subject before and beyond specular recognition and symbolic signification.[14]

> What is *Heim,* what is of the *Geheimnis*, has never passed through the detours, the networks, the sieve of the recognition. It has remained *unheimlich*, less inhabitable than inhabiting, less unusual [*inhabituel*] than inhabited. It

> is the surging of the *heimliche* in this frame which is the phenomenon of anxiety, and that is why it is wrong to say that anxiety is without object. Anxiety has another kind of object than the object of which the apprehension is prepared or structured by the grid of the cut, of the groove, of the unary trait, it is the *c'est ça* operating always by closing the lip, or the lips, of the cut of the signifiers, that thus become close letters, referring under closed fold to other traces. (Lacan 2004, 91)

Like Freud, Lacan rarely returns to the uncanny in other texts or seminars. It is, therefore, doubtful whether the uncanny can be considered as a genuine concept in Lacan's work. Although it is used to conceive of the important notion of the "object *a*," it cannot be considered as equivalent to it. Even in the seminar on anxiety, he soon abandons his provocative claim that the uncanny is the model of anxiety. Moreover, Lacan's contribution to the conceptualization of the uncanny for a very long time was not available to a large audience, although unofficial transcriptions of it circulated in Lacanian circles.

Bernard Baas explores the philosophical dimension of Lacan's conception of anxiety, which has been influenced by Kierkegaard and Heidegger. He suggests a link between the Lacanian notions of the "object *a*," *extimité* (commonly translated as "extimacy")—introduced in seminar VII on the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*—and the uncanny in order to articulate the confrontation with the Real, which escapes all signification and threatens the subject in its very foundation.

> The strangest, the most disturbing, is that there is something more intimate. And it is in this sense precisely that Lacan coins the term *extimacy* to characterize the *object a*. Because in anxiety, in that sort of horrifying encounter with the pure lack of the Thing, the subject of desire touches that which one has there as the more profound, the more originary, the more intimate in oneself. This is what one's desire depends on and proceeds from, and at the same time it is "outside the signifier" (hors-significant), that is to say, totally exterior to the order of the signifier which is the usual stead of one's desire. And that is why, in this encounter, the subject faints. (Baas 1992, 115, my trans.)

A number of other scholars associate extimacy to "the uncanny" because like the word uncanny, "extimacy" is a contradictory term

that expresses the conflation of inside and outside. While Baas emphasizes the ontological dimension of angst, when the subject is confronted with the Real that escapes signification,[15] Mladen Dolar historicizes the notion as an epistemological category. Extimacy connotes the disrupted distinction between outside and inside and as such it deconstructs Enlightenment thought. This deconstruction is, in Dolar's view, the essence of psychoanalysis as an emancipatory doctrine (Dolar 1991, 6).

However, even without knowledge of the seminar on anxiety, the general influence of Lacan's readings of Freud and of his teachings can hardly be underestimated. From the 1970s and 1980s onward, Lacanian notions and concerns like castration, the divided subject, the role of the image, perception, and identification in subject constitution, the object *a*, the orders of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, etc., will appear in the conceptualization of the uncanny. An early example is Samuel Weber's "The Sideshow, or: Remarks on a Canny Moment" (1973) that focuses on castration in "The Uncanny." More importantly, we will see in the next chapter how Lacan's characteristic attention to and punning on the signifier *unheimlich/heimlich*, as well as the conceptual persona of Freud that he introduces, will determine the uncanny's status as unconcept.

3.3. The Uncanny and Genre Studies

When Lacan, in the beginning of the 1960s, claims to have discovered "The Uncanny" and foregrounds the centrality of literature in the essay, this is of course a slight exaggeration. In literary criticism, "The Uncanny" gets noticed around the 1950s. At first, the conceptual status of the uncanny is rarely questioned and the text is usually related to the demonic, the occult, the grotesque, and the fantastic. One of the first discussions of Freud's essay is found in Peter Penzoldt's *The Supernatural in Fiction* (1952), which situates the tale of the supernatural "on the borderline between literary criticism and medical psychology." According to Penzoldt, the themes and motifs of the supernatural have their origin in the subconscious and in some cases, like the tale of horror, they even have a purely "neurotic" origin. Penzoldt turns to "Freud's brilliant essay on the uncanny" in his introduction in order to explain why people "should wish to produce [fear] in artificial form through fiction" (Penzoldt 1952, 6). On the basis of Freud's distinction between repression of infantile complexes and surmounting of primitive fears, Penzoldt defines and defends the psychological, sociological,

and moral function of "the modern weird tale" as a contribution "to the elimination of ancient and modern superstitions" (Penzoldt 1952, 6–7). Even tales exploiting repressed infantile complexes may help to establish a difference between a normal/healthy person and a neurotic person, both in terms of the author as well as the reader.[16]

An important scholar of the fantastic in France in that period is Louis Vax. Between 1960 and 1979, Vax repeatedly discussed "The Uncanny," and he remains one of its most critical readers to this day. In 1960, Vax wrote a volume in the famous *Que sais-je*–pocket series on *L'art et la litterature fantastique*.[17] The fantastic is for Vax not a genre, essence, or structure, it is a domain or territory to be explored. This is done by distinguishing the fantastic from other aesthetic categories (e.g., "le féerique," "l'horrible"), from traditional literary genres (poetry, tragedy, detective fiction . . .), from general phenomena (superstitions, humor . . .) and from "scientific" disciplines like psychiatry and psychoanalysis.[18] According to Vax, fantastic literature and psychiatry/psychoanalysis share an interest in the same object (as does parapsychology), but they consider phantoms, feelings of strangeness, and presentiments not as objective givens but as symptoms. Freud's "debatable but often perceptive" essay "The Uncanny" is used as the main illustration of this hypothesis. Psychoanalysis disenchants the literature it analyzes; when the mystery of the fantastic is solved, it is robbed of its charm: "Everything becomes clear and insipid. The psychology of depth becomes a psychology of platitudes" (Vax (1960) 1970, 22, my trans.). In *La séduction de l'étrange* (1965), even more wary of definitions than before, Vax sees the ultimate meaning of the word "fantastique" incarnated in each oeuvre of the fantastic as radically unstable and dynamic: it constantly changes with the context and the reader (Vax 1965, 6, my trans.). The notions of *l'étrange* or *l'insolite* ("the strange" or "the eerie") signify the sentiment evoked by the fantastic.[19] According to Vax, the sentiment of the strange alienates man, but not in a Hegelian manner (Vax 1965, 13). The struggle of man against the fantastic is fundamentally ambivalent: the strange both seduces and repels.

> The strange is a temptation: to suffer it is to enjoy it. Hence its ambivalence. Awareness of the strange, seduction of the strange, and horror of the strange go together. The strange is thus foreign, but a foreigner, which would also be, paradoxically, ourselves. *Unheimlich*, jokes Freud, equals *heimlich*, to the almost negation that is a product of repression. (Vax 1965, 13)

The chapter devoted to "The psychoanalysis of the strange" presents a reading of "The Uncanny" in which Vax's ambivalent attitude toward Freud and psychoanalysis gradually tilts toward the negative.

Vax reproaches Freud that his analysis of the fantastic is submitted to authority and that his worldview is traditional, causalistic, and mechanistic. This criticism will be worked out throughout a meticulous reading of the essay, starting from its central hypothesis that "the sentiment of the unheimlich is a miniature neurosis" (Vax 1965, 31). Almost randomly, he picks out elements from the essay, like the double or animism, and composes an alternative, critical response to "The Uncanny." In Vax's view, the essay's abstract scheme of the sentiment does away with the actual experience and is based on traditional and ultimately illusionary notions: rectilinear time, three-dimensional space, and simplistic causality. Freud can only conceptualize the existence of the sentiment by joining a perception—a conscious activity always already secondary to experience—to a memory, seen as a straightforward cause of the sentiment.

> In Freud, the sentiment of uncanniness possesses a temporal depth. It is not given immediately to the purely actual consciousness of the perceptive field. It needs the meeting of a perception and a memory to exist. (Vax 1965, 35)

It is an illusion to think that one can determine the fantastic by merely identifying motifs, as Freud's collection of uncanny motifs—in spite of his moments of lucidity—suggests. The fantastic makes the motif rather than the other way around.[20] Moreover, Freud's concentration on motifs reveals that psychoanalysis is trapped in a vicious circle. It erroneously thinks that it can decompose the fantastic to its very elements and then reunite them in a new synthesis, which will offer the essence of the fantastic. By doing this, psychoanalysis in fact excludes the most essential part of the experience: the presence of an experiencing subject.

Vax concludes his discussion of "The Uncanny" with a brief critique of psychoanalytic criticism of literature in general, illustrated by readings of Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw." The analytic gaze that fails to grasp the essence of the uncanny, because it fails to take itself into account as constituting factor, makes even more crucial mistakes when dealing with literature. Not merely dissecting and thereby killing the pleasure of literature, it confuses surface and depth in literature. Psychoanalytic criticism refuses to accept that there is nothing more to literature than what is said and feels compelled

to fill in the blanks of a story. Thus, whether dealing with the analysis of a sentiment or of a story, psychoanalysis always lapses into the same mistake and deceives itself because its starting point, the hypothesis of the unconscious underlying the conscious, of a depth beneath a surface, is wrong (Vax 1965, 43). Phenomenology by contrast focuses only on the concrete experience of the strange itself, not as a pure essence, but as existing in the conscious of the perceiving subject.

In his last book, *Les chef-d'oeuvres de la littérature fantastique,* Vax returns once more to the grand classics of fantastic literature. Well after Todorov's theory of the fantastic and the advent of deconstruction in France, in 1979, he leaves both currents programmatically aside. Significantly, if the structuralist theories of the fantastic are barely acknowledged in the text, the method of psychoanalysis is still extensively refuted in a footnote (Vax 1979, 11–12 n. 6, my trans.). Against the tyranny of literary theories Vax opposes the diversity of the "great works" whose sole common trait is precisely their originality. These oeuvres will be approached with respect and modesty, virtues that are missing in a lot of criticism, especially the deconstructive "meta-literature" of which Vax is almost as weary as he is of theory.[21] And yet, Vax's attitude toward theory and criticism is more ambivalent than it appears at sight. More than in his other books, he enters into dialogue with theorists and critics of the fantastic in footnotes, even if they are not the obvious, fashionable ones at the time.

Vax discusses the sentiment of the strange, offering yet another reading of "The Uncanny." Starting from the psychiatric work of Pierre Janet, Karl Jaspers, and Hans Gruhle, he wonders why Freud failed to link the sentiment of the uncanny to the psychiatric notion of "alienation of the perceived world" (*Entfremdung der Wahrnehmungswelt*). He highlights Freud's deviation from regular psychiatric procedures: "As support for his theses on the origin of the sentiment, the psychiatrist produces philological considerations, analyses of literary works and personal observations" (Vax 1979, 117). Vax also draws attention to the first pages of the essay, Freud's etymological study of the term, which he situates in a German philosophical tradition.[22] It is quite remarkable how the trope of seduction from *Séductions de l'étrange* reappears here in a different sense: Freud the psychiatrist is unable to resist the temptation of etymological reflections, although it is well known that dictionary definitions do not express anything about the essence of a phenomenon, even if they are the result of a systematic research in a positivistic spirit. Moreover, as a theorist of the fantastic, Freud (and the analyst in general) is in fact tricked by

the mystery that is the part of the fantastic that incites the sentiment of the strange. In his desire to solve the mystery and explain the sense of the strange, the psychoanalyst is lured by an unfounded equivalence between fact and sentiment and by a promise of depth that rests on an erroneous Platonic dualism. What is at stake is the temporal scheme that Freud proposes for the uncanny, the return of the repressed or the surmounted, and the idea that, by going to the origin of the uncanny, the artwork can be understood. According to Vax, art does not just express emotions, it provokes them. It creates *ex nihilo* (Vax 1979, 120). New in this phenomenology of the fantastic is the reference to Otto and the ambivalence between the uncanny and the sacred.

Throughout his oeuvre, Vax's attitude toward Freud and "The Uncanny" is ambivalent. As far as individual motifs go, Vax is prepared to follow Freud's reasoning, but as soon as psychoanalytic concepts are brought in, he is put off. For Vax, literature always takes priority over theory. In the conceptualization of the uncanny, the work of Vax—although perhaps the most substantial criticism of "The Uncanny" in this period—left few traces. His phenomenology of the fantastic did not outlive Todorov's structuralist theory. Still, certain aspects and themes in his work do announce the shift that takes place in the conceptualization of the uncanny around the year 1970 and that will constitute the paradoxical make-up of the "unconcept." As we will see, his phenomenologist perspective comes unexpectedly close to some of the deconstructive critiques of Freud, most importantly the influential reading of the essay by Cixous.[23] Especially, the seduction-isotopy introduced by Vax in 1965 will be pushed to extremes by Cixous in "Fiction and its Phantoms," as we shall see in the following chapter.[24]

3.4. The Uncanny as Aesthetic Category: Toward a Theory of the Uncanny

In the early genre theories of the fantastic, the focus lies primarily on the essay "The Uncanny" as a possible explanation for the origins, effects, and functions of the fantastic. Around the same period the notion "uncanny" begins to be used in literary criticism of individual literary works or authors for various reasons. First, the uncanny is applied in two psychobiographical studies that examine the work and figure of Franz Kafka (Hecht [1952] and Fraiberg [1956]). Bernard Hecht, a medical doctor, uses Kafka's work and "The Uncanny" as

a stepping stone and as a model for his analysis of "yearning," a sentiment that implies "a wish for the reinstatement of something familiar" (Hecht 1952, 50). His reading consists of an enumeration of instances of the Freudian uncanny in Kafka's work: Oedipal themes and animistic thinking, ambivalence, the evil eye, and intellectual uncertainty. Selma Fraiberg, by contrast, is interested in the specific literary evocation of the uncanny.[25] In her view, Kafka manipulates his unconscious conflicts represented in the latent content of his diary entries into the manifest content of his stories. The uncanny in his narratives arises when an extraordinary content is rendered factually. This leads Fraiberg to the conclusion that "[t]he striving for synthesis, for integration and harmony which are the marks of a healthy ego and a healthy art are lacking in Kafka's life and his writings" (Fraiberg 1956, 69). Hecht and Fraiberg are typical exponents of an early, rather crude form of applied psychoanalysis. Art is analyzed in function of the pathobiography of an artist, not for itself.

This attitude changes in two analyses of D. H. Lawrence's short story "The Rocking-Horse Winner" by James Hepburn (1959) and by W. S. Marks (1966). In this second type of psychoanalytic critique, the emphasis lies on the application of psychoanalytic insights and concepts to a story, including both form and content. Quite strikingly, Hepburn points out that "The Uncanny" is exemplary in that it raises questions of technique or form.

> Freudian literary criticism is inherently rash; it is not inherently simplistic. Up until now it has concerned itself primarily with the unravelling of hidden subjects and meanings, along with the corollary unravelling of motifs; its more significant and complex task—as with psychoanalysis itself—is the analysis of strategies, of form. Freud himself in his writings on literature emphasizes matters of content, but he does suggest approaches to the study of form. One of his little-known essays, "The Uncanny," is interesting for the variety of its suggestiveness. (Hepburn 1959, 9)

In two short stories that evoke the uncanny, one by Sherwood Anderson and one by D. H. Lawrence, Hepburn focuses on strategies of description. The selection of stories is motivated by stickiness: not only is "the term uncanny [. . .] used twice in its presentation and to good purpose" (Hepburn 1959, 10), but Lawrence's story was also collected in an anthology of the uncanny. Moreover, Hepburn uses passages that thematically convey a sense of uncanniness from the story to

supplement Freud's notion of the uncanny. Contrary to what Freud says, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" achieves uncanniness in spite of its fairy tale-like quality. In 1966, Marks undertakes another study of "The Psychology of the Uncanny in Lawrence's Rocking-Horse Winner." He establishes a link between the main character Paul's attachment to his hobbyhorse and to Freud's case histories, Little Hans and the Wolf Man. Again, stickiness is one motivation: the Wolf Man is explicitly said to have "'uncanny feelings' about horses" (Marks 1966, 184). Marks links the evocation of the uncanny to Lawrence's idiosyncratic view of psychoanalysis and points out that psychoanalysis is historically related to the modernist short story: "the modern short story and the psychoanalytic movement were concurrently developing a similar body of ideas" (Marks 1966, 382).

This awareness of historicity and of the complex relationship between psychology and social reality is also found in comparative literary criticism. One example is Robert Plank's analysis of the literary motif of the *golem* that transforms into the robot. Starting from the disagreement between Jentsch and Freud on the source of uncanniness in "The Sandman" (Olympia or the sandman), Plank maintains that a story-element can be uncanny to one critic and not to another. Moreover, it can transform over time.

> The evolution from the golem to the robot can also be understood as a consistent pushing forward of the frontier of the uncanny. Fiction would usually be ahead of reality in this movement, although sometimes behind it. Motifs would be chosen as being no longer so uncanny as to be taboo, and still uncanny enough to provide a literary thrill. (Plank 1965, 27)

These individual pieces of criticism demonstrate that the applications of the uncanny in literary criticism coincide with a growing awareness of the position of psychoanalysis vis-à-vis literature and with an explicit justification of selecting the essay from Freud's oeuvre, often based on the occurrence of the word "uncanny" or of motifs in the story. It is not surprising, then, that around this period, the early 1960s, the first substantial theoretical elaboration of the uncanny in literature by the German scholar Prawer sees the light, independently of the previous analyses.

The first step toward this is found in "Reflections on the Numinous and the Uncanny in German Poetry" where Prawer sketches the cultural and historical development of the experiences of the uncanny

(*Das Unheimliche*) and the numinous (*das Erhabene*).[26] Initially, Prawer relies on Otto's claims that the numinous and the uncanny stem from the same source.[27] In both cases, the uncanny and the numinous arise from an encounter with transcendence, or with "the wholly other" that confronts poets and readers with the limits of language. The experience cannot be expressed, but this ineffability is the beginning of poetry and of criticism. Prawer historicizes his account when he points out that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the traditional symbols and metaphors to express the experience of the numinous and the uncanny offered by religion have eroded. Otto's conception of the demonic-uncanny now gives way to another confrontation with the other and another kind of uncanniness that does not come from the outside but from within the self. This is, for instance, expressed by the literary motif of the double. Thus, the uncanny is now conceptualized as the Freudian uncanny (Prawer 1963a, 164), supplemented with insights from Carl Gustav Jung (the collective unconscious) and William James (the subliminal depths of our mind). It is possible to grasp the experience of the uncanny, which is ineffable yet somehow accessible through poetic language by means of "something like a rhetoric or grammar of the numinous and the uncanny in poetry" (Prawer 1963a, 165). The classical tropes and figures are the tools that allow a precise and concrete articulation of the evocation of the numinous and the uncanny.

Prawer is one of the first scholars to suggest that the uncanny and the numinous (das Erhabene) are intimately related. The territory of the numinous and the uncanny is mapped out as a shift from "the no-man's-land between poetry and religion" to "the no-man's-land between poetry, religion and psychology" (Prawer 1963a, 164). The German notion "das Erhabene" is more commonly translated as "the sublime," a more established aesthetic concept since the eighteenth century that has been rediscovered by deconstruction and (post)structuralism in the 1970s and 1980s (Guerlac 1991). Several scholars, following Bloom, will argue that the uncanny can be seen as "the negative sublime" (see Chapter 5). As Prawer suggests, the sensation of the uncanny has replaced the sublime in a secularized or disenchanted society. In his cultural-historical approach to the uncanny, Prawer is inspired by the hermeneutic, historicist, and comparative work of scholars as Wolfgang Kayser and Emil Staiger.

Kayser's work *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (1957) is interesting for several reasons. His starting point is the status and development of the aesthetic category of "the grotesque," a substantivized adjective like the uncanny, from its origin in fifteenth-century discourse on

architecture and ornamental art until the twentieth century. Second, although Kayser never explicitly refers to "The Uncanny"—like Vax, his attitude toward psychoanalysis and its practice of deciphering images is rather negative[28]—some of his definitions come very close to Freud's conceptualization of the uncanny.

> [. . .] the grotesque is the alienated world. But this calls for a further explanation. One could determine the world of the fairytale, when looked at from the outside, as strange and bizarre. But it is not an alienated world. This entails that what was familiar and homely to us suddenly reveals itself as strange and uncanny. It is our world that has transformed. The suddenness, the surprise is an essential part of the grotesque. (Kayser 1957, 198–199, my trans.)

Third, the literary corpus of the grotesque—Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, the surrealists—overlaps to a large extent with the literature associated with the uncanny and the fantastic. It is not surprising, then, that the themes and motifs of the grotesque, especially the ones related to the confusion between human, animal, and vegetable or between mechanical and human (for instance, monsters, puppets, wax-figures, automatons coincide with those of the uncanny: madness, estrangement, alienation, the city, separate body parts that take on a life of their own, the double.[29]

In 1965, the various elements and axes of Prawer's interest in the uncanny are integrated in a more unified and complex picture of "The 'Uncanny' in Literature." The subtitle of Prawer's inaugural lecture at Westfield College, London in 1965, "An Apology for its Investigation" indicates that his lecture is a defense, a plea, and a program for the study of the uncanny in literature.[30] Like Freud, Prawers begins by elaborating the double etymology of "heimlich-unheimlich" and defines the term *ex negativo*. The uncanny is different from horror, the supernatural, the grotesque, or "melodramatic or consciously 'demonic' trappings" (Prawer 1965, 7). It is not confined to a genre, a period, or to a national literature.[31] However, Prawer's conceptualization does not coincide with the Freudian uncanny. Instead, it is based on a mixture of various theoretical influences and examples. In order to "plot the landscape of the uncanny in literature" Prawer proposes a sophisticated program that consists of a literary investigation, somewhat similar to what he proposed in 1963, combined with a consideration of psychological, religious, and historical aspects of the phenomenon.

The first and most elaborately discussed auxiliary science is psychoanalysis/psychology. In Prawer's reading of Freud's interpretation of "The Sandman," the unconscious source of the uncanny allows reader and writer to enter into contact in a shared cathartic experience, within the safe, secluded domain of art (Prawer 1965, 12). The author "retains control of the 'forgotten language' of presentational symbols, the language of ritual, myth and dreams" (Prawer 1965, 13). According to Prawer, Jung was much more perceptible to the uncanny than Freud. This observation is based on the occurence of the word "unheimlich" in Jung's biography: "Among Jung's earliest experiences, it seems, was that of his mother's dual personality, 'one innocuous and human, the other uncanny' and of his own ambivalent feelings" (Prawer 1965, 13).[32]

Second, the philosophies of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard can make up for the problems of psychoanalytic criticism: the lack of discrimination between "fifth-grade scribblers and great poets" (Stekel), the danger of "bizarre distortions [. . .] that have the aim of reducing everything to the same infantile fantasy" (Marie Bonaparte), and "the temptation to build airy constructions that have insufficient base in observed or experienced reality" (Jung) (Prawer 1965, 15). Following the theologian Martin Buber, Prawer sees the uncanny as a protection of modern man against religious experience. Although the uncanny is meant to keep a traditional metaphysical and transcendent experience at bay, it simultaneously conjures it up. Prawer warns against "the temptation to equate the uncanny too readily with the daemonic, and thus treat all its manifestations as belonging, positively or negatively, into the sphere of the Holy" (Prawer 1965, 17).

Finally, like Kayser, Prawer emphasizes the importance of a sociohistorical component in the research. The relation between the uncanny and the psychic forces of society is determined by secularization and alienation. Man is doubly alienated from his being: in a religious sense, since he projects the best of his nature into a beyond, and socially because in an industrialized society, he is deprived of control over his work. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, the sense of alienation is reflected in a feeling of uncanniness in things. Man no longer has control over his world; therefore, the world of things seems strange and inimical (Prawer 1965, 19).

It is striking that Prawer at this point already suggests a number of historical themes and motifs that will become part and parcel of the concept much later in the 1990s, such as the specter of communism in the *Communist Manifesto* that haunts the Western world,[33] the fig-

ure of the bourgeois,[34] and racist and colonialist prejudices that have shaped the historical face of Western society. Prawer is well aware that the relationship between art and society is not straightforward and deterministic.

> The greater a work of art, the more complicated will be its relation to the society within which it was produced. But this does not mean that no such relation exists or that we should despair of analysing it. Artists *are* seismographically aware of tendencies within their society and period, and the uncanny fantasy of any generation has its roots firmly in the life of that generation, and may even turn out, like Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, to anticipate the horrible realities of the next. (Prawer 1965, 19)

In this quote, we find a veiled reference to the "horrible realities" of World War II and the Holocaust that hover in the background of his lecture and that necessitate the triple psychological, religious, and historical perspective.[35]

In the late 1960s, Prawer wrote one last essay containing the word "uncanny" in the title, "Robert Musil and the 'Uncanny.'" Unlike in previous texts, he explicitly takes the stickiness of the word "unheimlich" in Musil's work as his starting point and thematizes it.

> Only too often a conscientious investigator of the "Uncanny" in literature finds himself compelled to deal with writings whose language is as vague and imprecise as their psychology is crude and their appeal to superstition is blatant. He will therefore turn with relief to examining the frequent use of such terms as *unheimlich, das Unheimliche*, or *Unheimlichkeit* in Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*—for it soon becomes apparent that Musil himself shared the passion evinced by his hero Ulrich for exactitude of thought and expression. (Prawer 1968, 163)

In this essay, the threefold comparative research perspective informs the rich semantic field opened up by a thorough examination of various uses of the word in Musil's work. Like Freud, Prawer feels that the existence of the term "uncanny" entails that something corresponds to it in reality and that both the form and the essence (psychological, metaphysical or religious and historical) of this phenomenon can be investigated.

Quite surprisingly, Prawer's elaborate and in certain respects visionary comparative and intertextual theory of the uncanny left very few direct traces in the later debate on the uncanny.[36] This may be due to the fact that the lecture was hard to find. Only in 1980 was a revised and updated version included in his study of horror films, *Caligari's Children, The Film as Tale of Terror.*[37] Other reasons for the remarkable obscurity can be conjectured: the fact that Prawer in the burgeoning age of "Theory" positions himself more as a critic rather than a theorist and that he tends to adopt a moralistic attitude, as the term "apology" already indicates. Moreover, as a post-war German scholar working in England, at times when German philology was hardly popular, he may have fallen in between linguistic traditions. Prawer combines insights from theology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, but he never fully identifies with successful contemporary currents. In his preface to *Marx and World Literature*, for instance, he keeps the revolutionary, leftist view of art at bay: "This is not a book about Marxism nor an attempt to construct yet another Marxist theory of literature" (Prawer 1976, vii). Likewise, in *Caligari's Children*, French structuralist theories and film theory advocated by the leading journal *Screen* are acknowledged but not integrated. Prawer is a transitory figure who somehow slipped through the mesh of history, even if his carefully considered research program of the uncanny deserves more attention than it has received in the past forty years. Still, his legacy has been passed on indirectly by his student Wright.[38] Her authorative summary of the deconstructionist discussions on "The Uncanny" in *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (1989) will be an important step in the canonization of the uncanny.

Thus, the main influences on the conceptualization of the uncanny from this period, Lacan, Vax, and Prawer, can only be gauged indirectly. The period of conceptual latency may seem like a footnote in conceptual history, but it nevertheless demonstrates some important insights. First, merely relying on indexes does not suffice to develop a detailed and subtle map of the conceptualization of the uncanny. Conceptualization cannot be reduced to canonized texts or to the work of individuals. Sometimes, relatively "minor" figures—like Prawer but also Vax—help us gauge the intellectual climate of a period in which the emergence of certain images and rhetorical processes belatedly make more sense. Second, sometimes a concept deviates rather extensively from its origins. For instance, the emphasis on phylogenesis in "The Uncanny" and its earliest elaborations, e.g., Reik, disappeares in the course of a few years from the domain and psychoanalysis, to reappear a few decades later in a modified form in the field of genre

studies. Finally, in the period of conceptual latency, almost imperceptibly new conceptual strands are opened in "The Uncanny" that only show their relevance in the light of the later conceptualization that has been tributary to them. The shift of focus to literature and the highlighting of transcendent and ontological dimensions of the uncanny are contrasted to the scientific dimension of psychoanalysis that will later be characterized as naïve. The metaphor of seduction in the study of the fantastic and Lacan's rhetorical reading of Freud prepare the way for Freud's turning into a conceptual persona and for a personification of the uncanny. The gradual historicization of the transhistorical concept establishes relations to specific periods and to artistic currents and genres, and traces more clearly the outlines of a more or less coherent literary corpus.

4

Tying the Knot

The Conceptualization of the Uncanny

4.1. An Era of Transcontinental Conceptualization

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, the position of Freud's essay and the concept of the uncanny within the study of literature and within psychoanalysis fundamentally changes. The year 1970 can be considered a turning point in the conceptualization process of the uncanny because of the appearance of a number of groundbreaking works in which "The Uncanny" is treated in a new way. Derrida's "The Double Session" appears in installments in *Tel Quel* in 1970 before it was published in *Dissemination* (*La Dissémination*), Todorov's *The Fantastic. A Structuralist Approach to a Literary Genre* (*Introduction á la literature fantastique*) is published in the series Poétique, and Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms. A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* ('The 'Uncanny')" appears in the journal *Poétique* in 1972. Initially, this selection may be surprising—for one thing because the uncanny does not occupy a central position in either Todorov's or Derrida's text—but it is based on the lasting influence of these texts and on the way they interact in discourse. Todorov's and Derrida's impact on the conceptualization process may not be as straightforward as Cixous's, but it has been far-reaching and it is by no means indirect as was the case with Lacan and Prawer.

Conceptualization is never the work of individuals; it is the crystallization of an energy that is "in the air" at this specific moment particularly in France. In the early 1970s we find the first indications of conceptual awareness in Lacanian and Derridean circles. Already in 1972, Bernard Mérigot succinctly formulates the changed status and position of the uncanny within psychoanalysis.

> Psychoanalytic concepts circulate on the theoretical scene. They wear out, become tired, lose their freshness. Other theoretical formulations succeed the concepts of the first hour; concepts of a second level appear. So it goes with the *unheimliche*, which, although it does not occupy a central position in the Freudian development, is nevertheless, for those who pay attention to it, an important and complex concept. Complex by its mode of functioning which is often allusive and subterranean in texts inspired by psychoanalysis, important because it is situated at one of the knots of the theoretical articulation of psychoanalysis. (Mérigot 1972, 8, my trans.)

Mérigot's characterization of the "allusive and subterranean" operation of the uncanny is confirmed by recurring references to "l'inquiétante étrangeté" both in Lacanian psychoanalysis, by Georges-Arthur Goldschmitt, Wladimir Granoff, Jean Gillibert, Serge Leclair, Sami-Ali, and others, and in the work of other prominent French poststructuralist philosophers that have dealt with the work of Freud and Lacan, such as Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard.[1]

In 1982, two French journals devote thematic issues to the uncanny. "L'inquiétante étrangeté" of the *Revue française de psychanalyse*, the journal of the Parisian psychoanalytic society, contains translations of two short pieces by Freud, "The Medusa Head" and "On Transience," a number of essays that deal with the uncanny from various perspectives, as well as a short bibliography. In the same year, the second issue of the deconstructive-Lacanian journal *L'Ecrit du temps*, edited by Marie Moscovici and Rey, takes "The Uncanny" as its main point of reference. In their presentation, the editors highlight the linguistic aspect of the uncanny and the impossibility of translation.[2]

Weber's "The Sideshow: or, Remarks on a Canny Moment" (1973) is the first English reading of "The Uncanny" and "The Sandman" alongside Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novella *Claire Lenoir*.[3] Weber relates the themes of perception and castration to the mirror stage and Lacan's theory of subject formation but also builds on Todorov's theory of the fantastic. Weber is a typical exponent of American deconstruction's turn to continental philosophy. French deconstruction and especially Lacanian psychoanalysis are officially imported in American literary studies via the double issue of *Yale French Studies, Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise* (1977), edited by Shoshana Felman. It includes translations

of important French authors at the time, like Lacan, Daniel Sibony, Philippe Sollers, and Rey, alongside articles by upcoming American poststructuralist critics Felman, Peter Brooks, Fredric Jameson, Barbara Johnson, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In this general interchange between literature and psychoanalysis, the uncanny also appears on the scene (especially in Rey 1988).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the epithet "uncanny critics" becomes a synonym for deconstructive criticism in the States. The notion had been introduced by J. Hillis Miller in "Stevens's Rock and Criticsm as Cure" (1976) and in "The Critic as Host" (1977). Miller distinguishes between "canny" or Socratic, theoretical critics on the one hand, and "uncanny" or Appolonion/Dionysian, tragic critics on the other hand (see Culler 1984, 23). This distinction coincides with structuralism and poststructuralism or deconstruction. In "The Critic as Host," the relation between deconstructive criticism and other critical readings, and more generally between interpretation and the literary text, is described as the inextricable interrelation of parasite and host, in the double sense of guest and enemy.[4] The same complex implication and mortal interdependence is, according to Miller, expressed in the lexical ambivalence of the word pair "heimlich/unheimlich." In later overviews of and introductions to deconstructive criticism by Christopher Norris (1982), Jonathan Culler (1983), Wright (1984), and, Richard Barney (1987) the association of the uncanny and deconstruction is perpetuated.

A privileged term within early American and French deconstruction alike is the notion of "reading" that is inextricably linked to theory. The movement excels in detailed rhetorical analyses of all kinds of texts, philosophical and literary, sometimes focusing on passages or phrases. These readings aim at aporia, ambivalence, and semantic instability rather than at tightly argued interpretations and textual explanations; they challenge the status quo and open up new, unexpected paths of thinking. The uncanny becomes a popular concept within deconstruction on both sides of the ocean first and foremost because of the semantic ambivalence stressed in Freud's etymological account. This ambivalence was not discovered by the uncanny American critics but was brought to the attention first by Lacan in 1962 and Derrida in 1970. Indeed, the first actual conceptualizations of the uncanny must undeniably be situated in France, in numerous in-depth readings of commentaries on or notes to "The Uncanny." Several authors (re)discover the essay more or less simultaneously, seemingly independent of each other, but usually with Lacan or Derrida

as catalyst. In some cases, most notably in the work of Todorov, but perhaps also of Cixous, the earlier genre theories of the fantastic are additional sources. The discovery is often thematized by emphasizing the marginal status of the essay and by questioning the conceptual status of the uncanny. This coincides with other noteworthy discursive shifts that will be studied in detail in the texts by Todorov, Cixous, and Derrida.

4.2. Two Poetics: Todorov and Cixous

At first sight Cixous's highly rhetorical essay seems far removed from Todorov's structuralist theory of the fantastic. However, it is crucial to consider them together in order to fully grasp the simultaneous development of the concept of the uncanny in (post)structuralist theory and in criticism of the fantastic because this double locus lies at the heart of the paradoxical nature of the uncanny as an unconcept. In hindsight, Cixous and Todorov might appear as two opposite positions, deconstruction/poststructuralism on the one hand and structuralism on the other hand. However, like the genre of the fantastic itself, structural(ist) poetics already contains the germs of its own subversion to the extent that a clear-cut distinction between structuralism and poststructuralism will prove more difficult than expected. The simplistic view of poststructuralism as an improved version of structuralism does not hold: structuralism was more lucid and ironic about its limitations than it has often been made out to be. Conversely, as Culler also points out, poststructuralism was from the beginning parasitic on structuralism (Culler 1983, 23–24). Occasionally, it relapses into problems that structuralism indicated, reducing the text under deconstruction to a naïve, unironic, or simplistic reading in order to subsequently deconstruct its lack of irony.[5]

But there are more reasons for bringing the texts in close contact. In 1970, Derrida, Todorov, and Cixous were involved with the foundation of the new University of Vincennes (Paris VII), a revolutionary bulwark of structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and interdisciplinary research that attracted the avant-garde French intellectuals of the time (Dosse 1998, 146). Moreover, Cixous was cofounder of the journal *Poétique*, devoted to the study of literary theory, with Gérard Genette and Todorov. They were inspired by a growing theoretical awareness in the human sciences in general and in disciplines like linguistics, semiotics, and philosophy in particular. *Poétique*'s main ambition is theoretical rather than critical. If the

journal aims at establishing a dialogue between theory and criticism, the criticism it has in mind departs from the idea of evaluating and formulating norms. The analysis of individual literary works serves as the indispensable material basis for the formulation and testing of general hypotheses. In *History of Structuralism: The Sign Sets, 1967–Present*, François Dosse characterizes *Poétique* as a "warhorse against psychologizing theory" and as a rival to the notorious vanguard journal *Tel Quel*, founded by Sollers in 1960 (Dosse 1998, 155). In the late 1960s, early 1970s *Tel Quel* still adhered to a kind of metaphysical cult of "the Text." In accordance with its avant-garde status, it was dedicated to the idea of revolution, working on the intertwined levels of aesthetics, theory, and Leninist-Maoist politics (Dosse 1998, 156–157). By contrast, *Poétique* was more empirically oriented, wanting to devise an autonomous theory of literature and a practice of literary criticism following the Russian Formalists.[6]

Todorov's text "Poétique" (*Introduction to Poetics*) in the collective volume *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (1968) can be considered as a manifesto for the journal and the book series Poétique, as well as for Todorov's study of the genre of the fantastic, written in the same year and published two years later in the series Poétique. Todorov situates his "structural poetics" within two prevailing tendencies of dealing with literature. On the one hand, a descriptive approach attempts to remain as close as possible to a specific literary oeuvre. On the other hand, there is the more scientific structural approach, which is essentially "a labor of decipherment and translation" (Todorov 1981, 6). The elements and patterns of a literary work are transposed into something else, in order to reveal their underlying or deeper meaning. Structural poetics is thus an approach next to psychological or psychoanalytic, sociological, ethnological, and philosophical approaches to literature.

Whereas the object of the descriptive approach is a specific oeuvre, the formal object of structural poetics is "that abstract property that constitutes the singularity of the literary phenomenon: literariness" (Todorov 1981, 7). The literary work functions as a case study or example for literature in general. Todorov will go even further in his reduction of the literary work as the privileged object of poetics when he states that its object is in fact its methodology. This aspect of poetics has been underestimated in the reception of Todorov, but it is fundamental to the work that concerns us here, his study of the fantastic. Since literature is a specific way of using language, a science dealing with literature is necessarily self-reflexive, for any analysis can only be conducted in language. In other words, it must draw

from the same source that feeds literature. To discover the mechanisms of literary language, then, is nothing other than discovering the mechanisms of language in general. Hence, the language of the science of literature is always also its own research object and must constantly question its own status and limitations as metalanguage. Therefore, any scientific study of literature must necessarily be explicitly self-reflexive. Todorov's text is not as serious as one might expect. The self-reflexivity of his undertaking shines through in a refined irony, a playfulness and a deeprooted pleasure and love of literature underlying his scientific endeavors. These aspects, besides the importance of the uncanny and psychoanalysis for Todorov's poetics, will be brought forward in a dialogue with Cixous's much more literary, deconstructive reading of "The Uncanny" that builds up toward a poetics of its own in which the uncanny is equated to the fleeting, wild essence of fiction.

4.3. Poetical Structuralism: Todorov's *The Fantastic*

In 1970, *The Fantastic* marks a break with the prevailing, flourishing tradition of thinking about the genre in France, e.g., by Roger Caillois and Vax. It has remained a contested milestone for the study of the genre up to now, also within the English and German tradition.[7] Rather than studying literary discourse in general, as in "Introduction to Poetics," it is Todorov's ambition to devise a theory of literary genre. To this end, he uses the case of fantastic literature empirically to test his hypotheses and to develop and refine research models in analogy to descriptive models borrowed from the natural sciences (biology, chemistry), linguistics, and semiotics. Realizing that the concept of genre cannot have the same epistemological status in literature as in exact science, Todorov nonetheless regards it as a useful tool for the study of literature: "Genres are precisely those relay points by which the work assumes a relation with the universe of literature" (Todorov 1980, 8). In other words, genres are, like "literariness," abstract qualities that constitute the essence of literature but that can only be found embodied in the oeuvre. Hence, the need for a truly structural approach to genre. And yet, the fantastic is not just a case for Todorov. It will soon turn out that the precarious existence of fantastic literature as well as the constitutive element of the supernatural itself are symptomatic of literature as such. Thus, we are facing a peculiar to-and-fro movement between the concrete and the abstract that will work through various levels of Todorov's research program.

The Fantastic is a modest volume, displaying a tightly constructed, dense but subtle argument. As important as the study of genre in itself is the constant methodological preoccupation, the awareness of developing a methodology *ex nihilo* so to speak. A number of typical characteristics of structuralism are clearly recognizable: the highly abstract character of the investigation and the methodological dependence on binary oppositions. At every level of the analysis, each element is defined in a relative way, by opposition to other elements. From the beginning, Todorov is highly aware of the dangers, pitfalls, and limitations of his project. This lucidity penetrates and connects all levels of the analysis, as I will demonstrate by tracing the pervasive isotopy of threat, danger, and death. Thus, the case of fantastic literature is not only exemplary for literature in general; the poetics of the fantastic is also exemplary for the enterprise of poetics as such. As Robert Scholes puts it in his introduction to the second edition of the English translation:

> Todorov himself, in *The Fantastic*, seeks to examine both generic theory and a particular genre, moving back and forth between a poetics of the fantastic itself and a metapoetics or theory of theorizing, even as he suggests that one must, as a critic, move back and forth between theory and history, between idea and fact. (Todorov 1980, ix)

Last but not least, while Todorov's proposal is serious and encompassing, his tone is often ironic and playfulness tones down the scientific or even "dogmatic" impression that the work has made on many critics.

This impression of rigor is reinforced by the English title and subtitle of the book, *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, which fixes both method (structuralism) and object (the fantastic, a literary genre). This contrasts with the tentative, introductory quality of the French title *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (my emphasis) and with the constant critical examination of these categories throughout the work.[8] Robert Scholes, commenting on Richard Howard's translation, draws attention to the subtlety of Todorov's work.

> Furthermore, neither structuralism itself, nor poetics in general is noted for its ability to charm readers. Yet this essay in structural poetics—even though Richard Howard has emphasized in his translation a mechanical quality in Todorov's French prose—is a very engaging book. This is

> structuralism at play, generating its own rigourous games, like a young computer on a holiday. The result is genuinely pleasing. (Todorov 1980, xi)

As we will see, the notions of seduction and engagement are crucial to Todorov's focus on what is perhaps the most central aspect of fantastic literature, its effect on the reader. In our reading of *The Fantastic*, we will pay attention to the metapoetical reflection, to recurring discursive features—metaphors and imagery—as well as to the complex relation between the fantastic and the uncanny.

4.3.1. The Uncanny and the Fantastic

The most well-known aspect of Todorov's analysis is his definition of the fantastic, constructed in several stages in the second chapter of the book. The final version runs as follows:

> First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work—in the case of a naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetical' interpretations. (Todorov 1980, 33)

The three conditions stipulated by the definition correspond to the various aspects of the literary work distinguished by structural poetics. The first requirement deals with the verbal aspect of the poetical analysis, shaped according to the model of structural linguistics. It comprises both the utterances and style (*énoncés*) and the enunciatory position or locus of speech (*énonciation*) of the story. The second—optional—condition concerns both the syntactic aspect of a literary work (composition, which entails logical, temporal, and spatial relations between the story elements of a literary work) and the semantic aspect (themes). Finally, the third feature is related to another level of the reading process that transcends the level of the text, namely the choice between different reading attitudes.

Before proceeding to a genuine analysis of the pattern underlying the works of the fantastic, Todorov delineates the genre of the fantastic by opposing it to other genres. Several things are odd in this procedure: the different genres are not on the same level—one may wonder what kind of genre is meant, whether they are in fact genres at all—and the oppositions do not work in the same way. In Chapter 3, the fantastic is situated both temporally and spatially in between the genres of "the uncanny" and "the marvelous." Temporally, "the fantastic [. . .] lasts only as long as a certain hesitation," spatially, "it seems to be located on the frontier between two genres, the marvelous and the uncanny, rather than be an autonomous genre" (Todorov 1980, 41). The conclusion is that the fantastic has neither time nor space to exist: it is "an evanescent genre." One of the consequences of this is that the fantastic may only exist in part of the oeuvre, in a "castrated" form. Only in rare cases does it persist until the end of a work. In the diagram representing the situation, the pure fantastic does not even appear as a term; there are four categories rather than three: "the uncanny," "the fantastic-uncanny," "the fantastic-marvelous," and "the marvelous." In other words, there is no category for the fantastic as genre. In terms of visual representation, it is not a compartment or partition, but literally an untenable position, a dividing line that "corresponds perfectly to the nature of the fantastic, a frontier between two adjacent realms" (Todorov 1980, 44)' Moreover, the two adjacent domains of the fantastic, "the uncanny" and "the marvelous," are not neatly delineated spaces in the diagram either. Only on the side of the fantastic is there a clear frontier; on the other side they dissolve into the general field of literature.

Like the fantastic, the bordering genres are defined in terms of reader responses. The reaction to the fantastic is primarily hesitation; the reactions to the uncanny are somewhat more inclined to fear. Not surprisingly, we encounter the first mention of "The Uncanny" in this context for the feeling of fear excited by the genre of "the uncanny" is close to the sentiment of the uncanny described by Freud. Nonetheless, Todorov explicitly departs from Freud's hypothesis on the uncanny, even if his reading of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" would seem to confirm it.[9]

> According to Freud, the sense of the uncanny is linked to the appearance of an image which originates in the childhood of the individual or of the race (a hypothesis still to be verified; there is not an entire coincidence between Freud's use of the term and our own). (Todorov 1980, 47)

This remark (in which translator Howard suppresses Todorov's modal reservations and hedges: "if one is to believe Freud" and "would be linked") raises the question why the translator opted for "the uncanny" to render the category "l'étrange" rather than for "the strange" or "the queer," given that the accepted French term for the Freudian uncanny is "l'inquiétante étrangeté" or "l'inquiétant."[10] This translation has generated a form of stickiness that had major consequences. It has led to the conflation of the Freudian uncanny and the Todorovian uncanny and, more importantly, to the confusion between the Todorovian fantastic and the Freudian uncanny in (part of) the reception of Todorov's theory in the Anglo-Saxon world. Maria Tatar relates the Freudian uncanny to Todorov's definition via the notions of hesitation, romantic irony, and intellectual uncertainty:

> The fantastic draws its very lifeblood from an event that, defying reason, shatters the stability of the world to create a condition of radical homelessness. A world once safe and secure becomes hostile and treacherous. The new world is situated at the crossroad of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, at the point where the two worlds converge in meaning to suggest the sinister and the oppressive. With knowledge, the intellectual uncertainty created by the uncanny event yields to conviction, and the fantastic gives way either to the marvellous or to the strange. (Tatar 1981, 182)

Many critics resort to the Freudian uncanny, especially as it was deconstructed in the rereadings, in order to remedy the blind spots in Todorov's theory. Jean Bellemin-Noël even reformulates the genre in terms of the uncanny: "the fantastic is the intimate that surfaces and disturbs" (Bellemin-Noël 1972, 21, my trans.). He discusses the genre of the fantastic in the light of post-Freudian aesthetics and distinguishes between the literary fantastic and the psychic structure of "the phantasmatic" (see Chapter 5).

4.3.2. The Fantastic and Psychoanalysis

Todorov discusses the relation between psychoanalysis and the fantastic in the most prominent and revolutionary—but also the most neglected—aspect of his analysis of the fantastic, i.e., the semantic aspect. The themes of the fantastic take up no less than four chapters, in which analysis and metatheoretical reflection are intertwined. The most radical aspect of the semantic analysis is the degree of abstraction.

Todorov does not want to interpret; his aim is to describe underlying patterns. Thus, he distinguishes two groups of co-occurring themes: on the one hand variations on the themes of metamorphosis, on the other hand themes related to the existence of supernatural creatures.[11] The categorization is subsequently transposed to a higher level of abstraction. The principle governing the first group of themes is identified as the fading and transgression of the limits between the physical and the mental realm, between mind and matter, between word and thing (Todorov 1980, 120). This cluster of themes is called "themes of the self." Todorov places it into a contiguous relationship with a number of related structures or concepts, mainly on the basis of a parallelism with states like madness, intoxication, and infancy. Thus, "the themes of the self" are related to the Freudian system "perception-consciousness"; hence, the alternative denomination of "themes of vision."[12] The themes are found in an exemplary way in the recurring isotopy of eyes and visual motifs in the oeuvre of Hoffmann. "The themes of the other" comprise all variations on the theme of sexuality, including contrast figures to sexuality (mother, priest . . .), transgressions or perversions of "normal" sexuality (incest, homosexuality, group sex . . .).[13] The scale ranges from violence and cruelty to the theme of death and typical motifs related to death (life after death, vampires, corpses . . .). The poles of the spectrum turn out to be similar to the Freudian drives, Eros and the death drives. In analogy with the structural equation "the themes of the self" and the system "perception-consciousness," it is not a surprise then that Todorov will equate this thematic group to "the relation of man with his desire—and thereby with his unconscious" (Todorov 1980, 139). Following Lacan, who famously equated the unconscious and language, this group is called "the themes of discourse."

In the concluding chapter on "the themes of the fantastic" Todorov adds another term to the opposition of the two thematic groups. Psychosis is added to the themes of "self—perception-consciousness—vision." Neurosis is inserted in the chain of "other—unconscious—discourse."[14] Todorov examines the position of psychoanalysis vis-à-vis the fantastic, through two seminal texts: "The Uncanny" and Penzoldt's *Supernatural in Fiction* (1965). In "The Uncanny" Freudian psychoanalytic criticism and psychoanalysis as a whole turn out to be Janus-faced:

> In Freud's study of the uncanny, we must acknowledge the double character of the psychoanalytic investigation. It is as if psychoanalysis were at once a science of structures and a technique of interpretation. In the first case, it describes

> a mechanism—the mechanism, one may say, of psychic activity. In the second case, it reveals the ultimate meaning of the structures so described. It answers both the question of "how" and the question "what." (Todorov 1980, 149)

As a hermeneutic science, psychoanalysis is a contradiction in terms. This is reflected in the discursive opposition between "describing a mechanism" on the one hand, which suggests a distanced, technical perspective, and the register of "revealing the ultimate meaning" with quasi-religious connotations on the other hand. Todorov chiastically illustrates the two attitudes with two "fortunate" examples from "The Uncanny," subtly inverting the sequence and order of importance of both attitudes.[15] Whereas for the analyst the description of structures is a stepping stone to interpretation, poetics brackets the hermeneutic search for meaning or sense in favor of the scientific attitude of description. The hierarchy is represented in the comparison of both perspectives to the activities of, respectively, translator and linguist. Punning on Freud's phrase "two courses are open at the outset," Todorov clearly opts for one way, the scientific attitude of the linguist. The idea of translation, of determining the essence of literature by means of words, is for him untenable.

And yet, any simple dichotomy is immediately complicated by the modifications between brackets: "(though it is true that there is no fixed limit between translation and description . . .)" and "(psychoanalysis [is] understood here as but one branch of semiotics)" (Todorov 1980, 150–151). Moreover, Todorov indicates a third path of psychoanalytic literary research in the essay. The pathobiographical approach exemplified in Freud's remark on Hoffmann's childhood may "no longer [be] in fashion today," but Todorov does not completely dismiss it altogether if "this relation must be given as one of the features of the work itself" (Todorov 1980, 151).[16] However, in this case, the research object is the author, and the text is one possible access road to enter the author's psyche.

In retrospect, Todorov's entire analysis of the discourse of the fantastic functions on a similar criterion: the hesitation that is the first condition for the genre of the fantastic is not just a side-effect, it is a programmatic imperative of the genre present from the first line of Todorov's definition.[17] This hesitation can be seen as a cognitive state of mind, which is close to ambivalence. In the mind, two equally valid solutions coexist. In the sense of hesitation as a textual effect, it triggers both a cognitive response and an affect. On another level, the idea that the text produces something in the reader, that it

makes him or her do certain things or adopt a certain attitude toward the fictional word, implies the existence of the genre of the fantastic as a living being.

4.3.3. Birth and Death of the Fantastic

A text is something that can live and die, that is created and killed. In the essay "Introduction to Poetics," Todorov already uses the image of a text as a living and mortal being in the description of the two attitudes toward the literature. On the one hand, he points out that the idea of a perfect description of a literary work (the ideal of the translator) ultimately entails the death of the work (Todorov 1981, 4). On the other hand, a scientific approach of literature must not be afraid to apply "dead" or even "deadly" notions to a "living being": "in every 'part' of our body, there are at once blood, muscles, lymph, and nerves: this does not keep us from employing all these terms and using them without anyone's protesting that we do so" (Todorov 1981, 10).

In *The Fantastic*, the life of the text is related to the supernatural, which is a constitutive feature of the discourse of the fantastic. This trait belatedly sheds light on the requirement of a non-poetical and a non-allegorical reading of the text in Chapter 4, for the supernatural is defined as a rhetorical figure taken literally. The supernatural actually creates something out of nothing, or rather, out of the immaterial substance of language. It calls into being something that exists in a fictional world to which characters and reader alike respond as if it were real. In Todorov's rhetoric, language and the supernatural are connected with metaphors of birth, as in the following quote:

> If the fantastic consistently makes use of rhetorical figures, it is because it originates in them. The supernatural is born of language, it is both its consequence and its proof: not only do the devil and the vampires exist only in words but language also enables us to conceive what is always absent: the supernatural. The supernatural thereby becomes a symbol of language, just as the figures of rhetoric do, and the figure is, as we have seen, the purest form of literality. (Todorov 1980, 82)

The mechanism of the supernatural is as it were a *mise-en-abyme* for the mechanism of language as a whole. As a kind of super-figure it is a prototype of literary language in particular, where the function of

denotation has become completely autonomous: literature creates its own universe. In this way, Todorov reconceptualizes "literary imagination," "creation," and "the willing suspension of disbelief" using the supernatural as an exemplary yet extreme case.

The second verbal device of the fantastic is its specific enunciative situation. As a rule (not always though, for this is the only optional condition mentioned in the definition), a fantastic story is narrated by an I-narrator, who is most suitable to represent the hesitation with regard to the supernatural, for he embodies a contradiction between the level of enunciation (the act of narrating) and the level of what is narrated. The conflation of roles of narrator and character can easily create the doubt that is the primary requirement of the fantastic. Moreover, the fact of saying "I" triggers identification as a textual rather than a simple psychological mechanism "since as we know the pronoun 'I' belongs to everyone" (Todorov 1980, 84). To the position of the narrator corresponds that of the narratee ("us"), whose response to a text is inscribed in or programmed by a text. In the description of the syntactic aspect of the genre, the experience of reading is emphasized.

Todorov contests the common tendency to describe the structure of the fantastic in spatial terms as a line rising toward a point of culmination. By contrast, he focuses on the interrelation between temporal organization and enunciation: the structure of a fantastic story is determined by the time and sequence of reading. Like the I-narrator embodies the act of narrating, the structure of the fantastic stages the act of reading because it is fundamentally dependent on it. Paradoxically, this entails that the fantastic has only one life: it exists only as fantastic in the act of reading for the first time, when reading is still a spontaneous, automatic (unconscious) activity. Like Freud in "The Uncanny" and Vax in *La séduction de l'étrange*, Todorov represents reading as an essentially passive yet pleasurable experience: the reader "falls under the spell of the fantastic" (Todorov 1980, 89–90). A second reading is less automatic and therefore more detached and (self-)reflexive. Because the reader already knows how the story ends, she no longer hesitates. Inevitably the attention is drawn to the construction of the story. The charms of the fantastic are lost or killed in the process of being revealed as procedures, a notion that connotes mastery and even manipulation.[18]

Even more than its emergence, then, Todorov stresses the precariousness of the genre. In *The Fantastic*, the imagery of danger, peril, threat, death, and murder works on several levels. Discursively, it is most apparent in the opposition of the fantastic vis-à-vis neighboring genres, the uncanny and the marvelous, poetry and allegory:

> The fantastic therefore leads a life full of dangers and may evaporate at any moment. (Todorov 1980, 41)
>
> But the perils incurred by the fantastic do not stop here. If we move to another level, the one where the implicit reader questions not the nature of the events, but that of the very text which describes them, we find the existence of the fantastic threatened once again. (Todorov 1980, 57)
>
> The entire narrative has the effect of being the illustration of an idea; and thus the fantastic receives a fatal blow. (Todorov 1980, 69)

In these quotes, the outlines of a subversive, romanesque counter-text to Todorov's scientific enterprise appear in which the genre of the fantastic functions as the victim or "persecuted maiden" in a gothic or fantastic novel: it is threatened and chased in a constant game of pursuit and withdrawal. Such an ironic reading is reinforced by paratextual clues. In the French text, intertitles are placed at the beginning of each chapter that summarize the argument.[19] Rather than subdividing each chapter into paragraphs, the intertitles are printed in italics and aligned right in a manner reminiscent both of the classical schoolbook and of the nineteenth-century novel.[20] The sequence of these intertitles forms a summary of the chapter, which is occasionally interspersed with an incongruous note that tones down the scientific pretences of the poetical approach. Thus, the subtitle "final melancholy note" contrasts with the confident, positivistic tone built up in the sequence of the earlier subtitles of the first chapter.[21]

Gradually, the intertitles become more and more self-reflexive. The first person plural and the adhortative imperative—typical for the scholarly text—have the effect of drawing the reader into the reasoning as an accomplice.[22] Through procedures of pronominization and repetition, the intertitles call to mind the sequence of a plot summary, suggested by a phrase like "New dangers for the fantastic." This intertitle, found in Chapter 4, brings us home to the personification of the genre. The fantastic is both the object of the poetical researcher's quest and the subject of its own story—the rise and fall of the historical genre of the fantastic—in which psychoanalysis plays a final, important role.

This rise and fall is due to external and to internal reasons. First of all, because the fantastic hardly occupies space or time, it is constantly threatened by other genres and by readerly attitudes. This has

to do with the historicity of the genre, which is for Todorov limited to the nineteenth century. Todorov's much contested, yet subtly argued hypothesis of the death of the fantastic as an actual historical genre is founded on the specific corpus of the historical, nineteenth-century fantastic. Here it is most apparent that for Todorov, genre is a literary category with a capital L and not simply a categorization of texts. For Todorov, the fantastic not only represents but also embodies the essence of what is literature.

> [. . .] by the hesitation it engenders, the fantastic questions precisely the existence of an irreducible opposition between real and unreal. But in order to deny an opposition, we must first of all acknowledge its terms; in order to perform a sacrifice, we must know what to sacrifice. Whence the ambiguous impression made by fantastic literature: on the one hand, it represents the quintessence of literature, insofar as the questioning of the limit between real and unreal, proper to all literature, is its explicit center. On the other hand, it is also a propaedeutics to literature: by combating the metaphysics of everyday language, it gives that language life; it must start from language, even if only to reject it. (Todorov 1980, 168)

Two seemingly exclusive views on literature, one transhistorical or monumental, the other historical or teleological, intersect here. The idea that the fantastic represents the "quintessence" of literature has been built up in the text on various levels of generality. On the level of the discourse of the fantastic (the verbal aspect), the supernatural as a metaphor taken literally offers a mise-en-abyme for the principle of language because it not only represents what is absent but also brings things into being. The supernatural in the fantastic has three functions: first, it creates suspense (pragmatic function), second, it signifies nothing other than itself (auto-designation, the semantic function) and, third, the supernatural syntactically determines the course of a narrative because its intrusion disturbs an initial equilibrium and stimulates the action. However, the supernatural is not quite the same as the fantastic, nor is its presence typical or exclusive for the fantastic as genre. Specific for the fantastic is the reaction to the supernatural event and the way it is inscribed in a text and this is historically determined. "Aesthetically satisfying" are those fantastic narratives in which hesitation is expressed in the text. Likewise, the themes of the fantastic (the semantic aspect) are first and foremost defined in

linguistic categories, but there is a transition from and modification of the so-called rigid, scientific ambition of the structuralist perspective to a philosophical conception of literature as transgression or transcendence of the ordinary.

The analysis of the fantastic more than yields the notion of transgression in order to arrive at a quasi-metaphysical view of literature as transcendence. The insistent metaphors of threat and danger in the first chapters culminate in a darker, gothic version of literariness (*littérarité*) in terms of murder and ultimately suicide:

> Now literature exists by words; but its dialectical vocation is to say more than language says, to transcend verbal divisions. It is, within language, that which destroys the metaphysics inherent in all language. The nature of the literary discourse is to go beyond—otherwise, it would have no reason for being; literature is a kind of murderous weapon by which language commits suicide. (Todorov 1980, 167)

In this reasoning, the fantastic and literature as a whole lead a precarious existence on the edge, in a constant push-and-pull game with extinction. The metaphors of suicide and violence provide the paradoxical link between the transhistorical notion of the "quintessence" of literature—not just the essence but a superlative—and the historical perspective on the fantastic as the "propaedeutics" of literature. The fantastic is, as it were, the victim of its own success. In its attempt to subvert language and to transgress the boundaries of reality in order to attain the supernatural, it remains dependent on the very category that it tries to undermine or to deny: the real. In this reliance on a dichotomy between real and imaginary, the genre is fundamentally indebted to the metaphysics of the positivist nineteenth century.[23]

Although the idea of the genre's disappearance is hardly substantiated, in retrospect, the analysis provides a number of clues. From the first delineation of the genre, Todorov has—as we have pointed out above—insisted on the genre's evanescence. Moreover, in the analysis of the syntactic aspect of the fantastic the specific temporality of the fantastic entailed that a fantastic story can only be read once as fantastic. In an exemplary manner, the fantastic reveals the working of literature, precisely because the hesitation that marks the reading experience of the fantastic is inscribed in the text. The story both reveals and masks its own mechanism. When the hesitation is resolved, the mystery disappears. The machinery is exposed and the fantastic ceases to exist for it no longer works. The transverbality is

exposed as an effect, an illusion, a ploy. The fantastic relapses in the category of reality, of the ordinary language it sought to transcend; the supernatural is accepted, explained, or read as a literary figure.

A mise-en-abyme of this relapse can be found in the key notion of transgression, which reveals and consolidates the norm by violating it. In this reasoning, the fantastic as historical genre must be short-lived: it pushes a story to the furthest extreme of metanarrative while remaining within the boundaries of fiction. Such radical questioning of literature within literature can only last for a moment, the duration of a first reading experience, for the programmatic transgression of boundaries makes it impossible to maintain the delicate oscillation between revealing and veiling its own mechanism and essence. The fantastic is the summit of literature in the sense that it already contains within itself a metaperspective, but that is what kills it in the end. Exposing the frame of literature also indicates the limit of what is literature. In this light, the concluding phrase of the very first chapter is oddly appropriate: "Imperfection is, paradoxically, a guarantee of survival" (Todorov 1980, 23).

Todorov made this metaphysical statement early in the book in the context of the scientific study of literature, poetics. No matter how scientific the methodology one tries to develop, it is always from the outset doomed to failure because of the elusive, ever-transforming nature of its research object: "every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example changes the species" (Todorov 1980, 6). As a result, no matter how rigorous the ambitions of a structural poetics, it will never live up to the standards of "scientificity" required by the exact sciences, nor will it produce the same kind of factual knowledge. Or to put it in yet another way: literature can never be grasped in terms of purely descriptive/prescriptive norms because the essence of literariness is precisely a transgression of the "normal" function of language (representation of reality as basis for communication), of the categories of reality, and also transgression of literary norms. Furthermore, the difficulty with the metalanguage of poetics is that, on the one hand, it is never accurate enough to grasp the uniqueness and transgressive character of literature. On the other hand, the very idea of devising such a metalanguage, of trying to translate literature into something else or to separate language and content, is a betrayal of literature itself, for as Todorov repeatedly demonstrates, literature means only itself. And yet, poetics is alive:

> These skeptical reflections need not discourage us; they merely oblige us to become aware of limits we cannot

> transcend. The goal of knowledge is only an approximate truth, not an absolute one. If descriptive science claimed to speak the truth, it would contradict its reasons for being. (Todorov 1980, 23)

4.3.4. Transformations of the Fantastic

In a sense, we could say that the twentieth-century discipline of poetics continues where the historical genre of the nineteenth-century fantastic ended. Structural poetics fulfils the need to study the mechanism of literature and thus incorporates the metaliterary aspect that was so emphatically present in the historical fantastic. The fantastic attempted the impossible, to talk about literature (in order to manipulate its effect) while remaining within the boundaries of literature. It tried to penetrate the mystery of literature, while keeping its illusion intact, and this is what killed it in the end. By contrast, the ambitions of poetics are much more humble. Poetics adopts a perspective outside literature and accepts the problems that such a position entails. Likewise, psychoanalysis has surpassed the fantastic in providing a vocabulary to talk about liminal phenomena: "To proceed a step further: psychoanalysis has simply replaced (and thereby made useless) the literature of the fantastic" (Todorov 1980, 160). Psychoanalysis and the fantastic both fulfill a basic human need to deal with phenomena of transgression and liminal experiences. The transition also signals a competitive or perhaps even teleological twist.

The discourse of psychoanalysis has proved to be more efficient than fiction in the long run, so that it has rendered fantastic literature as a historical genre superfluous. It may still exist, but it no longer has a pressing function in society. Conversely, psychoanalysis has taken its clues from fantastic literature. Although Todorov generally seems to accept psychoanalysis as an established science, the studies he cites to demonstrate the interrelation between psychoanalysis and fantastic literature are hardly canonical or central psychoanalytic texts. Moreover, they can all be linked to "The Uncanny."

> The themes of the fantastic have become, literally, the very themes of the psychological investigations of the last fifty years. We have already seen several illustrations of this; here we need merely mention the theme of a classic study (Otto Rank's *Der Doppelgänger*); and that the theme of devil has been the object of numerous studies (notably Theodor Reik's *Der eigene und der fremde Gott* and Ernest Jones' *Der*

> *Alptraum in seiner Beziehung zu gewissen Formen des mittelalterlichen Aberglaubens*, etc. (Todorov 1980, 161)[24]

In his fascination with superstition, the psychoanalyst is compared to the fantastic narrator in establishing causal relations between "apparently unrelated facts" (Todorov 1980, 162). This comparison of the psychoanalyst and the fantastic narrator also announces the deconstructive rereadings of Freud's work as a piece of fiction or narrative, starting with Hélène Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms," in which psychoanalysis will be even more radically associated with fantastic literature. Psychonalytic discourse becomes, like the fantastic, a research object of poetics.

Thus, it appears that in spite of the efforts to discriminate and classify phenomena neither the lines separating various structural sciences nor the boundaries between sciences themselves and their research objects are clear. As a result, Todorov constantly oscillates between drawing boundaries and blurring them. The same ambivalent attitude also characterizes his reading of the literary factors that account for the disappearance of the fantastic as a historical genre. Todorov concludes his analysis of the analogous function of fantastic literature and psychoanalysis with what he calls an "ironic remark," taken from "The Uncanny" without mentioning the source.

> The Middle Ages, quite logically and more or less correctly from the psychological viewpoint, attributed these morbid manifestations [i.e., epilepsy] to the influence of demons. Nor should I be surprised to learn that psychoanalysis, which is concerned to discover these secret forces, has thereby become strangely disturbing in the eyes of many people. (Freud in: Todorov 1980, 162)

In the quote, Freud, like Todorov, suggests a change of guard of the supernatural by psychoanalysis: on the one hand, medieval occultism and superstitions voice an intuitive truth made explicit and mastered by psychoanalysis; on the other hand, an occult power is attributed to psychoanalysis precisely because it conjures up the medieval superstitions it sets out to explain but which have not been completely overcome.

Todorov's moderate optimism regarding the life and future of poetics is only the preamble to his study. His concluding chapter ends with literature when he examines the other side of the coin, provoking perhaps the greatest controversy of his entire theory, the specific literary heritage of the fantastic.

> Fantastic literature itself—which on every page subverts linguistic categorizations—has received a fatal blow from these very categorizations. But this death, this suicide generates a new literature. Now, it would not be too presumptuous to assert that the literature of the twentieth century is, in [a] certain sense, more purely "literature" than any other. This must of course not be taken as a value judgment: it is even possible that precisely because of this fact, its quality is thereby diminished. (Todorov 1980, 168–169)

The imagery of murder and suicide develops into a metaphor of reincarnation. Like a phoenix, a new literature arises from the ashes of the fantastic, which is still literature, but also—like the "super-natural" and the "sur-real"—more "literature" than literature. In a way, the teleology is extended to the absurd: the quintessence of literature (the fantastic) gives way to the more than literature, "more" not in the qualitative sense, but of "meta," of a beyond. Although the fantastic's subversion of referentiality and representation may have failed from a literary point of view, it was successful to the extent that it has revolutionized language and thought in general.

In the twentieth-century version of the fantastic, literature continues where the fantastic left off. Following Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Blanchot, literature (literarity) is no longer described as a tension or opposition between linguistic or philosophic categories but in existential terms of death, murder and suicide, presence and absence, possibility and impossibility. In this dichotomy, one pole has disappeared, unhinging the logic of representation: death, absence, or the void cannot be represented.

> Literature can only become possible insofar as it makes itself impossible. Either what we say is actually here, in which case there is no room for literature; or else there is room for literature, in which case there is no longer anything to say. [. . .] The operation which consists of reconciling the possible with the impossible accurately illustrates the word "impossible" itself. And yet literature exists; that is it greatest paradox. (Todorov 1980, 175)

Literature is a continuous battle against death—between murder and suicide—ending in an acknowledgment of existence, against all odds. Here, we find an even more radical version of the lucid optimism in the face of absurdity that also characterizes the enterprise of poetics: paradoxically, imperfection is a guarantee for survival.

So, what makes Todorov's study so important for the conceptualization of the uncanny? First, there is the stickiness of the translator's choice of "uncanny" for "étrange." In itself, this does not suffice, especially since Todorov explicitly distinguishes his notion of "uncanny" from Freud's. However, the notion of "hesitation" as the distinctive feature of the fantastic allows for a shift of the uncanny toward the fantastic, through the link with the lexical ambivalence in Freud's definition of the "uncanny." Second, although Freud's text does not occupy a central position in *The Fantastic*, psychoanalysis as a whole and "The Uncanny" in particular do stand out in Todorov's theory. A discursive analysis reveals that the essay is one of the only Freudian texts that is repeatedly cited—at a time when this was not really common yet—and that the analysis of Hoffmann is regarded as a prototypical structural analysis. Moreover, psychoanalysis is the fantastic's successor in that it takes over its social function of transgression. The question then arises: did psychoanalysis develop as a result of the "suicide" of the fantastic or did the fantastic die as a result of upcoming disciplines of the humanities, like psychoanalysis? This is a hotly debated issue by critics of Todorov, especially given the fact that the fantastic as well as related genres like the gothic, horror, surrealism, science fiction, and cyberpunk continue to exist and flourish in literature, cinema, and visual art and that not all the instances of these genres can be reduced to popular, hence derivative, culture.

What certainly did "stick" in later genre studies has been the association of these genres and the Freudian uncanny: to this day, the uncanny is regarded as an excellent tool to analyze the effects of the fantastic. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Todorov was not the first to establish a link between the themes and motifs treated in "The Uncanny" and literary texts. However, what makes his analysis special, although it is not often noted in the criticism of *The Fantastic*, is that he manages to relate the genre of the fantastic to the effects, the functions, and the essence of literature—literariness—as a whole. In this way, his strict and constrained but also highly self-reflexive and ironic research program for the structuralist analysis of genre at the same time fundamentally transcends the boundaries of genre studies. In the wake of this, the uncanny gradually moves to the heart of poetics and of a theory of literature itself. It is Cixous, following Derrida's lead, who will really push this movement (perhaps first announced by Lacan) to the center stage in her very successful close reading of "The Uncanny."

4.4. Chasing Freud's Chase: Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms"

Cixous's "Fiction and its Phantoms" appeared in *Poétique* in 1972, two years after the publication of Todorov's *The Fantastic*. A slightly modified version is included in the volume *Prénoms de Personne* in the series *Poétique* in 1974. Two years later, an English translation by Robert Denommé appears in *New Literary History*, alongside a complete reprint of "The Uncanny." The merit of "Fiction and its Phantoms" cannot be overestimated. It not only contributed to the reputation of Freud's essay among literary critics and philosophers but it also influenced a whole series of rereadings of "The Uncanny."

Cixous is, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, most renowned for her involvement with *écriture féminine*, a feminist movement that originates in "French" poststructuralist thought in the seventies.[25] Ecriture féminine wants to deconstruct the logo- and phallocentrism in the grand narratives of Western culture, where the feminine is mainly defined as absence: it has neither place nor voice. Important strategies to expose this are metaphor, contradiction, parody, and mimesis. Language, one of the instruments of power of the "phallogocentric" culture, is dislocated from the inside out dislocated in order to bring about a transformation of language and the mental and cultural patterns governing it. Herein rests the second goal of écriture féminine: to make women write in a characteristic, feminine language so that the feminine can find a place in society. This language is often described as a fluid, nonlinear form of "writing the body." In écriture féminine metaphor becomes, like Todorov's supernatural, a creative process in its own light. Feminine writing is no longer the expression or representation of a feminine enjoyment (*jouissance*), it is jouissance that comes into being in the event of expression.

Prénoms de Personne (*First Names of No One*), the book in which "Fiction and its Phantoms" is included, can be regarded as a turning point from criticism to a more radical deconstructionist writing practice.[26] Moragh Shiach emphasizes the strategic and programmatic aspects of Cixous's individual readings of fetish authors (Hoffmann, Heinrich von Kleist, Freud, Poe, and Joyce), rather than the theoretical ambitions. Verena Andermatt Conley draws attention to the book's manifesto character and reads it as a struggle against the father.[27] In her brief account of Cixous's political and institutional commitment, Shiach does not mention Cixous's involvement with the journal *Poétique* (of which she was one of the cofounders). Likewise, Conley and

Christa Stevens align Cixous with Lacan, Derrida, and Deleuze, three master thinkers of postmodernism, but this is a limited picture of the period. *Prénoms de Personne* is not a radical break with structuralism, it is also a continuation and radicalization of strategies and images found in Todorov's structuralist *The Fantastic* and in some ways even a return to Vax's phenomenological approach. In this perspective, the inclusion of the reading of "The Uncanny" among a number of fictional texts (Kleist, Hoffmann . . .) is less surprising than the peculiar position and function of her reading of that text within the whole of *Prénoms de Personne*.

4.4.1. "The Uncanny" as Missing Link

In the preface to *Prénoms de Personne*, "Prédit" (included in Susan Sellers's *Cixous Reader* under the title "Prediction"), a number of key-terms are systematically opposed, such as "writing," "desire,"and "life" at one pole versus "limits," "castration," and "death" at the other. Writing and desire are intimately linked because writing is equated with "production of desire." Both must resist the subjection of desire to the logic of "possession, of acquisition, or even of that of consumption-consummation" (Sellers 1994, 27) or the "grand narratives": capitalism, consumerism, Christianity (marriage as consumption) as well as psychoanalysis, science, and philosophy. The result of this kind of logic is the ultimate "false consciousness" of desire in the so-called knowledge that the aim of all desire is its dissolution, i.e., death. Death in all its forms is what the narrator refuses to accept: "Nothing can stop me from thinking otherwise, without accounting for death" (Sellers 1994, 27). This denial of death can take place in writing, through "the transgressive, and the transformative potential of language" (Shiach 1991, 38).

Todorov's conception of literarity in *The Fantastic* was marked by death, violence, boundaries, and transgression. The supernatural is constituted by transgression of the laws of the natural and transgression also underlies the themes of the fantastic. Since transgression makes the law visible, it may (but need not) be a reinforcement of the boundaries between reality and fiction, between normality and abnormality. Cixous's view of fiction is quite similar to Todorov's, but she rejects the idea of boundaries and death as the ultimate limit altogether. The texts that will be discussed all deal with "life without limit, the whole of life" (Sellers 1994, 27). Limits are imposed by the establishment and by institutions. Writing and life are two contiguous

domains; they cannot be separated by an artificial separation imposed by an exterior designation: what is dealt with in writing is precisely life. Writing functions as a mise-en-abyme for life while at the same time transcending and defying its laws. In the final analysis ("on the near side of its limiting face"), the distinction between limits vanishes: in all its various shapes and incarnations the limit ultimately comes down to death.

For the sake of analysis, Todorov wanted to isolate literariness from life in a separate realm. Subsequently, he endeavored to map this domain using spatial metaphors of territoriality and boundaries on the one hand, and the notion of transgression to indicate the inadequacy and impossibility of neat generic distinctions on the other hand. Cixous by contrast characterizes fiction as "the possibility of limitlessness," as "this non-space," and rejects the logic of mapping and plotting, of distinguishing genres and oppositions while radicalizing the autonomy of fiction. The other side of the limit is the realm of what cannot be expressed, indicated by the neologism: "the plureal" (*pluréel*). This "plureal" evokes the "surreal," but does not connote that reality is surpassed or transcended.[28] Rather, it is something that is more real (*plus de réel*), it reveals itself more immediately than reality, that is multiple (*pluriel*), a reality that is more than reality (*plus que réel*) and at the same time no longer reality (*plus réel*). As Conley rightly points out, in her stressing of life, desire, transformation, and multiplicity, Cixous comes close to the philosophy of Deleuze (Conley 1991, 15), even though she generally remains rather implicit in naming her alliances.

In the second part of the "Prediction," a program is introduced in preliminary form. As opposed to the defensive isotopy of threat and danger in Todorov, we get here an aggressive tone, with military metaphors of frontline and attack: "All of them say the struggle must be led on two fronts: legitimacy must be doubly assaulted" (Sellers 1994, 29). The first front is that of subjectivity and the subject, where the negative terms "unicity, totalization, conservatism, totalitarianism" are placed against the positive pole of "divisibility" and "fragility of the center." These oppositions may in the end be reduced to the basic antagonism between "the great Proper" (the ownership-logic of the proper name rooted in capitalism [property] and Christianity [propriety]) and "the infinite No one," the multiple/split subject as well as a reference to Joyce's *Ulysses*.[29] This first battleground evolves into the second front of intersubjectivity.[30] Here, the negative pole consists of "logocentrism, phallocentrism, castration, the logic

of the gift-that-takes" as opposed to "another logic [which] predicts an eroticism without injury [. . .] a new desire." The introduction of "phallocentrism" and "castration" puts us on the track of a critique of psychoanalysis and the Lacanian view of desire founded in lack and the predominance of the father. With the Lacanian concept of "the Name-of-the-Father," Cixous juxtaposes "the name of No one" as the ultimate meaningless proper name that no longer names anything and thus escapes all control. The plural of first names in the book's title shatters the logic of logocentrism in all its constituents through multiplication and play with language. As Conley puts it:

> The title, *Prénoms de Personne* does not confer meaning upon a body of text that follows. The anagrammatization of *père* into *pré*, *per*, dismembers the (paternal) body. *Prénoms*: first names, not last names that would inscribe the subject into a patrilinear genealogy, a plurality of first names, multiplying the effects of the subject; and *pré-nom*, that which is before the noun, before something is named, given unity. *Personne*, as both somebody and nobody, *Pèresonne*, Joyce's Nobodaddy, remains undecidable. (Conley 1991, 14–15)

In the third part, "For the Signified" this reading practice is explicitly positioned vis-à-vis contemporary trends in literary theory and philosophy, like deconstruction and, less explicitly, structuralism. That Cixous engages with deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis is clear from the recurrent references to both theories. Still, her practice is set apart from these currents by stressing the "signified" rather than the "signifier." Fiction is unique in its capacity to invent and to create a universe of its own. Cixous attaches great importance to the text's production of meaning, but the term "poetics," in the sense that it was used by the journal *Poétique* or by Todorov, does not seem to be part of her vocabulary, nor does she seem to pursue the same degree of autonomy for the analysis of literature: "A literary-philosophical practice is to be defined" (Sellers 1994, 31). Throughout, "reading" and "practice" are privileged over "analyzing" and "theory."

> [. . .] in the last few years, a theorization of reading is produced on the critical scene. Practice, it has been noticed, is somewhat rarer: the reader seems to be fascinated, to the point of alienation, by the study of the instruments rather than by the operations they are supposed to be used for. (Cixous 1974, 9, my trans.)

Cixous criticizes the self-reflexive methodological interest in the development of a conceptual apparatus that has been raised to the same height as the object of study itself, literature. Her second critique is directed toward the privileging of "signifier" over "signified" which "goes as far as the scotomisation of the signified, and, at the limit, its foreclosure." As an alternative, "she urges work on the signifier and parallel work on the signified, a dialogue between literary effect and philosophical (analytical) concepts" (Andermatt Conley 1991, 19).

More concretely, Cixous proposes to extend postmodernism to postromanticism by reading a number of German romantics as well as Joyce and Poe under the aegis of the same battle. The neologism in the subtitle of the first part of her book, "Regards sur les cousins *germeurs*" ("Glances at the *germinating* cousins," my italics), is quite accurate: the German romantics are both relatives and forerunners of the present revolution.[31] Todorov's discourse of threat and death led to the extinction of the historical genre of the fantastic and to the resurrection of a "purer" literariness in the literature of the twentieth century. In Cixous's text, the life and desire in connection with writing and speech prevails: there is no question of the death of texts or genres nor of language commiting suicide, as Blanchot and Todorov put it. In the dialogues with older texts, they are reinvigorated and revealed in all their power as "warhorses."

This conversation with or interrogation of the text is related to the active dimension of Cixous's reading practice, in which metaphors and textual strategies enact what is theorized and involve the reader. On a micro-level, this is reflected in the emancipatory function of literary procedures like allusion, neologism, and pun, reminiscent of Joycean punning in *Finnegans Wake*.[32] The linguistic play extends to the macro-level of the text. As Conley also shows, nearly all words end up being read for hidden semantic cores by association with other signifiers and intertextual allusions.[33] These procedures could be interpreted as strategies to involve the reader in the text. The efforts made to grasp the "vibrations" of the text fulfill the reader with a certain pride. The more riddles she can solve, the more she can guess what is not said, the more she feels she belongs to a privileged in-crowd which is able to comprehend the innovative logic. Almost unnoticed, the reader surrenders to the text and inscribes her- or himself into its discourse. The gradual composition of the program in a series of metaphors and oppositions builds up tension, whereas the vagueness and obscurity of the references retain a certain mystery. Moreover, the constant shifts of perspectives—from "I" to "all," back to "we" and

"one"—can be read as a theatrical invitation of the reader to enter the textual logic.

The vagueness and indecision of all these pronouns contribute to the enactment of an encompassing, indeterminate narrative instance of "No one" (Personne) in which the reading subject seems to dissolve. The textual strategies aimed at identification are efficient and compelling but not unproblematic. The reader is faced with a choice: either she goes along with the text's logic and identifies completely, or she rejects the reading program that is proposed on the basis of extra-textual criteria. That is, in order to criticize, the reader must make certain suggestions explicit and reveal the contradictions in the text. However, in doing so, she cannot but deviate from the text and must formulate what is merely implied at the risk of violating the text, which has always already covered itself against all possible critique by its programmatic vagueness.

> The pitfalls of adopting Cixous' own reading practice and account of her writing—namely that such an approach prevents the critic from furnishing other, negative interpetations—are hopefully circumvented by the inherently plural and open nature of Cixous' descriptions. (Sellers 1996, xvii)

The prominent absence of "The Uncanny" in the "Prediction" is not a coincidence. By emphatically not mentioning either "Fiction and its Phantoms" or the motif of the uncanny, they are lifted out of the corpus, yet their vague, ghostlike contours can be intuited through the insisting allusions to castration, death, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Moreover, the view of a reading practice as a resurfacing of hidden and forgotten meanings as well as the choice of the corpus of *Prénoms de Personne*—Hoffmann, Kleist, Poe, Joyce—gain significance through the retroactive relation with the concept of the uncanny. The belatedness also works the other way round. Enigmas like the death drive and castration anxiety are never fully deciphered or resolved in "Fiction and its Phantoms" and work through in the rest of the book.[34] On the one hand, "Fiction and its Phantoms" belongs to "the side of the other," or the other side of a reading practice.[35] The texts are pervaded by another logic, in which the other (the text, but also the other of the text) is speaking in and throughout the readings. On the other hand, the essay also stands apart. Although it is a German text, it dates from a later period than the nineteenth-century romantic

texts read in the chapter (Hoffmann, Kleist). Moreover, the text will be used to develop not only a method of reading literary texts but also the outlines of a theory of fiction. Finally, the subject or object genitive "its" in the title brings to mind the motif of the ghost in fiction and in the genres related to the uncanny: ghost stories, gothic novels, the fantastic.[36] Fiction itself is a ghost, ontologically ambivalent and haunting other types of discourse. Rather than Todorov's ironic undertone of the fantastic as damsel in distress, writing and reading will be regarded by Cixous as ghostly activities performed by a peculiar type of subject that is always split or multiplied.

4.4.2. "Fiction and its Phantoms" as Quest in the Labyrinth

"Fiction and its Phantoms" is structured as an almost line-by-line reading of "The Uncanny," which is ideally read alongside Cixous's essay.[37] It is striking that there are, as in "The Uncanny" itself, but a few quotes in the text, usually words, phrases, or the odd sentence. Ideally, the reader should almost instinctively be able to situate every word in the text. The same holds true for the occasional allusions to other Freudian works. From the first word, the implied reader is dragged along the breathtaking staccato rhythm of the long-winded sentences, interrupted by a nervous punctuation with hardly any time to halt or to reflect on the text from a more distanced point of view. The interdependence of implied author and reader is presented as "a vicious interchange between pursuer and pursued" (Cixous 1976, 526) with unstable, shifting positions of dominance, a to-and-fro movement of surrender (to seduction) and control (manipulation). This mechanism of decentralization, interdependence, and doubling is examined on all possible levels. At each moment, the text performs and perverts the very issues that are being explored in Freud's essay, making it very difficult to neatly summarize its ideas or to entangle the associative semantic chains.

The parasitic, deconstructive logic and the overblown, highly metaphorical and burlesque tone of this essay seem far removed from Todorov's crystal-clear, tongue-in-cheek prose and the logical unfolding of his analysis. And yet, the two texts are motivated by a quest for an abstract, ungraspable quality of literature—for Todorov "literariness," for Cixous (reading Freud) "the mystery of literary creation and the secret of this enviable power" (Cixous 1976, 527). Both in the case of fantastic literature and in the case of "The Uncanny," this "essence" is described as an effect associated with a semantic field that encompasses

notions like hesitation, indeterminacy, and ambivalence. Literariness is paradoxical and transgressive (Todorov), wild and elusive (Cixous). Todorov and Cixous, to various extents, agree that fiction by nature escapes categories and classifications. Its dynamic movement cannot be fixed or halted, but only described belatedly when it has already moved elsewhere or when it has already transformed into something else, causing scientific or structural projects like poetics and psychoanalysis to continually fail and limp behind. Moreover, like Todorov, Cixous also examines the link between fiction, life, and death.

However, these matters are approached very differently. Todorov tries to devise a more or less scientific model, structural poetics, even though the scientificity of that model is ironically toned down: "imperfection is, paradoxically, a guarantee of survival." Cixous by contrast opts for extreme virtuoso play on the signifiers, even if her "literary" prose remains tributary to structuralism and its metaphors. Their different attitudes cannot be disconnected from the symmetrically opposed research objects: a literary genre versus a psychoanalytic essay. Whereas Todorov maintains the distinction between theory, methodology (poetics), and research object (literary genre), Cixous from the beginning stresses the interrelation between psychoanalysis and literature, in a fundamentally ambivalent reading practice that combines and confronts literature and psychoanalysis on all discursive levels. The division between research object, methodology and theory, between literature and psychoanalysis, all but disappears.

> These pages are meant as a reading divided between literature and psychoanalysis, with special attention paid to what is produced and what escapes in the unfolding of the text, sometimes, by Freud and at other times by his double. Indeed, Freud's text may strike us to be less a discourse than a strange theoretical novel. (Cixous 1976, 525)

In the opening sentences of the essay, a number of vital notions and metaphors are introduced in their mutual interdependence. In the staccato tempo of the text, which is more pronounced in the longwinded French sentences, the rhetoric is dramatized and brought to life. What is at stake in Cixous's reading—reading and writing and the positions this entails—is always doubled or split. Cixous's essay thematizes what it is doing at every level, revealing all the plotting and staging that underlies a textual logic. This reflexivity proliferates and turns back on itself. Because the rhetorics of exposition are exposed and defamiliarized to such an extent, it becomes virtually impossible to

simply return to a "naïve" or "automatic" usage of some of the most basic discursive procedures.

Although Cixous's text is a very detailed close reading of "The Uncanny," it is neither faithful to the text nor attempts to create this illusion. Freud's text is rearranged and perverted through subtle shifts in the focus of attention and parodying exaggeration. The frequent use of parody and mimicry makes it hard to identify clear-cut and stable positions. Moreover, the tropes and images are multilayered, interrelated and dynamic in a radical attempt to prevent all closure. The conceptual imagery is borrowed from Freud's essay (the double, repetition, castration, revenant, etc.), from other texts read in *Prénoms de Personne* (e.g., the puppet theatre [Kleist], or the ghost [Poe]) or from contemporary criticism and theory (e.g., the text as texture or web, as body). What is most striking, however, is the intricate entanglement of the various chains of metaphors.

One of the motifs dominating Cixous's reading is the quest, first suggested by the allusions to Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth. Narratologically, a quest entails a hero and an object of desire. The hero who leads the way is Freud; the object is "the truth about the Unheimliche." We—narrator and reader—shall follow Freud on his literary quest in "a strange theoretical novel."[38] This label, a hybrid of literature and theory, parallels the earlier characterization of the reading practice as "a reading divided between literature and psychoanalysis." In such a reading, the reader not only reads what happens and how the train of thought evolves, she also reads like an analyst who concentrates on the hesitations, the incoherences and silences in the patient's discourse. Thus, Freud is also followed in the sense of being shadowed. We watch where he exposes himself: "the psychoanalyst psychoanalyzed in the very study he is seeking to develop" (Cixous 1976, 540).

The reading method is first and foremost based on a far-reaching degree of identification: the reader is extremely sensitive to and unsettled by the text.[39] This process of identification is described in terms of doubling, like a kind of shadow dance. Inscribing herself into the text, the reader steps into a rollercoaster, as it were, following all the movements of the text:

> The reading jumps. One thinks one is following a demonstration, one feels the terrain is cracking up: the texts slides a few roots under the ground, others are air-born. What here has the face of science later resembles some type of novel. (Cixous 1974, 14, my trans.)

The notion of the "strange theoretical novel" will be fragmented even further: we are not dealing with a new genre; instead the text constantly hesitates between various discourses and slips from one genre into another. The delineation of the text is mapped out on a vertical and a horizontal axis, reminiscent of Todorov's definition of the fantastic. On the vertical plane, there is a slippage from the level of reality and scientific demonstration to "under the ground," an allusion to the depth of the unconscious—in general and Freud's personal unconscious in particular—as well as to a higher "air-born"[40] plane of speculation and metaphysics. On the horizontal plane, the genre of the scientific analysis gives way to the novel and its subgenres, specified in the course of the text: quest, detective story, drama, comedy, ghost story. However, immediately the idea of a straightforward (teleo)logical development from cause to effect in order to arrive at a final conclusion is undermined: "Freud jumps from effect to effect" (Cixous 1974, 22, my trans.). The path followed by Freud is not merely doubled; it bifurcates into various sidetracks and crossroads, advancing and withdrawing, leading toward dead ends.

The metaphors of the quest and journey are akin to the semantic fields of exploration and adventure, introducing the idea of suspense and thrill. The insistence on excitement points at the libidinal impulse motivating the search. In the first sentence of "The Uncanny," the semantic kernel of "drive" (Trieb) in the phrase "feels impelled" (verspürt den Antrieb) is read by Cixous as a revelation of how Freud is attracted by something to venture into the unknown, to leave familiar terrain (psychoanalysis, science) for another "domain" (aesthetics). Thus, the notions of seduction and attraction are linked up with territorial metaphors and transgression. The sexual undertone also present in *The Fantastic*, with notions like seduction and transgression and in the "Prediction," where writing was inextricably linked with desire, becomes even more explicit here. The fact that the text does not remain within safe boundaries is a response to "a solicitation," "a subtle invitation to transgression" (Cixous 1976, 527). Freud is seduced by the enigma and the ambivalence of the uncanny. He is driven by desire, by Eros, lured by the sensual attraction of the unknown and the forbidden: his "object of desire" is from the first paragraph described as "something 'savage' [. . .] a breath or a provocative air" (Cixous 1976, 525).

One aspect of the desire driving Freud is *Wissgier*, the desire of the researcher or scientist for knowledge: "Freud and the object of his desire (: the truth of the uncanny) throw light on each other by reciprocal fires" (Cixous 1974, 13, my trans.). The use of brackets seems

to indicate a certain reticence. The quest for the truth of the uncanny is not the whole story. In fact, truth is just a part of a more general scientific endeavor, fraught with power, institutions, and repression. This link, also made in the "Prediction," is exposed in the discussion of the theme of death in "The Uncanny."

> Before death's invasion (which the analyst, "the man of science at the end of his own life," cannot master by theory but which he outplays by a complex strategy of detours and points), Freud invokes the screen of traditional defense: men's "responses" to death are all of the order of the Establishment, of ideological institutions, religion, politics. An evolution has taken place from primitive animism to the moral order. (Cixous 1976, 544, trans. modified)

The desire for knowledge also entails a desire for mastery. It is tainted by aggression, by the urge to control, domesticate, and neutralize the force emanating from the uncanny.

The transition from desire for knowledge—originating in an unconscious, libidinous source—is rhetorically reflected in the image of pursuit that gives way to the hunt or chase: "track down the concept," "meticulous, cautious pursuit—but twisted, interminable" (Cixous 1974, 13). The hunt is ambivalent. Although Freud seems to be in charge, the hierarchy is not clear. The object refuses to be domesticated or grasped: "Everything takes place as if the *Unheimliche* turns back on Freud himself in a vicious interchange between pursuer and pursued" (Cixous 1976, 526, trans. modified). At the end of the essay, the chase turns out to have been in vain all along, for there never was an object to be pursued: "It is also and especially because the *Unheimliche* refers to no more profound secret than itself: every pursuit produces its own cancellation" (Cixous 1976, 547). Freud has failed in his capacity as scientist or researcher. The pointlessness of the search provokes a profound feeling of "uneasiness" for "us, unflaggingly disquieted readers."

Cixous insists on the ambivalence of attraction and repulsion, of pleasure and unease, experienced by Freud and the reader alike. This ambivalence is in part related to the fundamental dualism in Freud's drive theory. Freud is not merely driven by desire and subject to the pleasure principle, he is also hesitant, faltering, afraid even. On yet another track of the unconscious, Freud's quest appears to be motivated by the death drive, in the guise of the repetition compulsion.

> Change of subterraneous trajectories. The pleasure principle and its beyond enforce their unsettling reigns: sudden projection in front of the scene of the automatism of a deaf and blind repetition, dominant, the most intimate of psychic resources. (Cixous 1974, 30)

At the end of that other trajectory awaits death, the end of all desire and imagination or representation. Fear of death also explains the uneven trajectory, the lack of progress, the hesitation and the impossibility to round up his quest. Wondering, always postponing the end, is a way of avoiding or postponing a confrontation with death: "At this moment Freud puts up his greatest resistance to his own discovery: he defers, backs up, regresses, or stalls his time in the research; takes another detour" (Cixous 1976, 541). The repetition in Freud's text and the unease it provokes reveal the instinctual character of his text—Freud cannot help being driven by the repetition compulsion.

The movement of repression and return of the repressed produces the sensation of the uncanny. Freud never gives up his attempts to (re)gain control over his object, at the price of losing an objective distance toward his object. As a result, he loses his identity as a rational representative of science. The scientist is unsettled in his search for boundaries and clear-cut categories, not merely by the idea of death as the ultimate limit that cannot be grasped at all but also by the idea of death intruding in life, which blurs his categories. This is made clear in the motifs of the ghost and the doll, creatures that confuse the boundary between life and death.

> Typical of the problematic (of the) limit [Le propre du trouble de la limite] is this threatening mobility, this arbitrariness of the displacement against which repression rises. "The prefix *Un* is the token of repression," says Freud. Let us add this: any analysis of the *Unheimliche* is in itself an *Un*, a mark of repression and the dangerous vibration of the *Heimliche*. *Unheimliche* is nothing but the other side [face] of the repetition of *Heimlich* and this repetition is two-faced: that which emerges and that which is repelled. In the same way the text pushes and pushes back until an arbitrary term. (The *Unheimliche* has no end, but the text needs to stop somewhere). And this "conclusion" sets itself off again and reveals itself as a recurrence and as a reserve. (Cixous 1976, 545, trans. modified)

The quest, adventure and chase, the mixed sensations of *tremendum* and *fascinosum*, the insistence on limits, the tension between revealing and repression, and the motif of the ghost and animated doll are all features that can be related to novelistic suspense, as found in the fantastic and genres like the gothic novel, detective and adventure stories. Perhaps the clearest parallel to Todorov's analysis of the fantastic is the insistence on doubt, uncertainty, and hesitation as main effect of the text.

> To a text of uncertainty, distrustful but fascinated reading: for if in the exchange of the text and its reading, in this play of seduction where the text always has a time ahead, the doubt of the text produces the doubt of the reader, he can even produce his pleasure and his audacity. Hence, it will be the question here of the strange pleasure that the reading of the Freudian text provokes, and of what doubles it, inseparably: an unease that joins Freud's, describes it, and that can only rarely be distinguished from it. (Cixous 1974, 14)

Like the fantastic novel, the reading experience of this text is mainly characterized in terms of ambivalence: "pleasure" and "unease," fascination, attraction as well as disappointment, and distrust. The reader is intrigued, involved, but despite the identification, she keeps at a safe distance because she senses how Freud is uncertain, hesitant, how he loses control. The doubling of reader and writer also implies difference. The reader follows the same trajectory but from a distance.

4.4.3. Pull the Strings

In his quest for the truth, Freud the heroic (re)searcher follows several leads or threads, like Perseus following Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth.[41] The image of the thread resurfaces in the text in various forms. It connotes, on the one hand, the idea of the guideline that structures a discourse, a clear logical construction of discourse around one governing principle. On the other hand, the metaphor of the text as a web or texture is a topos in (post)structuralism. Freud the detective tries to unravel the network of threads in order to reveal a pattern, which will then again be tied up in a coherent unity in which one fact leads to another: "The text becomes knotty, and stops. A cut" (Cixous 1976, 541). Only, the network does not hold: "Knots: but is taken

together is just as quickly undone, what is affirmed becomes suspect, the threads lead to their section, or to something disentangled" (Cixous 1974, 30). The various thematic threads are a tangle, stories jump from one subject to another: "threads tightened; twisted; entangled. Stories mangled; suspended" (Cixous 1974, 13). Thus, the guiding threads that ought to lead to the core of the labyrinth, the uncanny, are dead ends, which Freud tries to solve by taking other clues from the most diverse directions but the weaving is endless: "another knot of examples: will the weaving of references ever stop?" (Cixous 1976, 544).

In the first paragraph, the images of the text as network or tapestry, the thread and the spatiality of the labyrinth merge into the image of the puppet theatre. This metaphor is multilayered. First of all, there is the spatial element of the stage, where an illusion of reality is created. Watching in the dark of the theatre, the reader identifies with the characters that are put on stage and takes the mock reality of the theatre for real while maintaining a safe distance. At the same time, the strings of the puppets suggest the presence of a puppet master who pulls the strings. Freud as author of the text manipulates the various fragments in order to create the illusion of a coherent whole, but, in fact, he relies on a number of tricks: "The dialogue entered upon with the reader is also a theatrical artifice in which the answer precedes and encloses the question" (Cixous 1976, 532, trans. modified). Moreover, the pattern of the strings reveals another pattern behind the text, "a subterraneous trajectory"or another scene, that is connected with the idea of the double reading, between literature and psychoanalysis.

The image of the puppet theatre originates in a number of literary motifs. First, the doll Olympia in Hoffmann's "The Sandman" plays an important part in Cixous's reading of Hoffmann, which is continued in "Les noms du pire" ("The Names of the Worse"), the next essay of *Prénoms de Personne*. In "Fiction and its Phantoms" one paragraph is devoted to Olympia: "Note to Olympia; or the other story of the Sandman."[42] By virtually eliminating Olympia from the story, Freud not only represses the feminine presence and the existence of the doll but he also eliminates the elements of theatre and pantomime in Hoffmann's story. Furthermore, the motif of the puppet theatre refers to German romanticism in general, Goethe, and especially to Kleist whose story "Über das Marionettentheater" (a fetish text of deconstructionism) is read in the chapter "Les Marionnettes" ("The Puppets").[43]

Second, theatre involves acting and roleplaying: Freud is not just the author and director of the essay, he is also an actor playing several roles, as is the reader.

> Indecision of the analyst, the psychologist, the reader, the writer: the multitude of named or anonymous subjects which take turns and which disappear into the frame of the text, since they have been contradicted by Freud himself, go along two routes at least which lead us back to our dissatisfaction. [. . .] We will see that our role of reader taken up in the *Unheimliche* is a strange double role of the other reader, the one with whom we are by moments spectrally identified, that of the *Sandman*. (Cixous 1974, 14)

In the end, the reader is just another reader, added to a seemingly endless list: Nathanael who (in Freud's version of "The Sandman") tries to discover the identity of the Sandman, Freud reading "The Sandman," the narrator reading Freud's versions of "The Sandman" in "The Uncanny," and finally the reader reading "Fiction and its Phantoms" to be read in turn, etc. As a result of this doubling and splitting, the function of the author is bracketed. Freud is neither the "neutral" author of a scientific essay nor the analyst, observing from a distance: he manipulates the data and the text, and he is himself deeply implicated.

The theatrical structure of Freud's text is uncovered mainly through strategies of mimicry and comic exaggeration. "Fiction and its Phantoms" is structured as a play around various characters or figures: Freud and his doubles, Hoffmann, the characters of "The Sandman" and finally the narrator (Cixous) and reader.[44]

> In doing this, the "author" introduces here the preoccupation of the theatre, of everything that the theatre represents as simulacrum of living, and of the theatricality that life as a canvas can hide. On the stage of the stage, the relationship between Freud's discovery in the order of scientific truth and the mechanism itself of fiction can be put; Freud's own text functioning itself like a fiction: the long work on the ego-drives, the dramatic redistribution on the deadlocks, all this resembles the specific work of fiction, the "author" exerting his privileged rights as narrator to which the analyst cannot lay claim. (Cixous 1974, 20)

The mirror-effects highlight and ridicule the dramatic effects in Freud's text while explicitly commenting on them. By explicitly doubling these strategies on a formal level—e.g., by hedging Freud's quotation in the present tense "says the orator"—Cixous moreover indicates how this

"staging" is part of every discourse. However, whereas Freud tries to conceal his manipulations, Cixous accentuates the rhetorical machinery as much as possible. The dialogue with the reader is revealed as artificial, and subsequently, the gesture is repeated in the direct address to the reader: "We get sand thrown in our eyes, no doubt about it" (Cixous 1976, 532).

"Fiction and its Phantoms" consists of short scenes separated by intertitles and often ending in a question or paradox to heighten the tension. The rapid changes of perspectives (sometimes within one sentence) and the various subject positions within the scenes create the illusion of a dialogue between various actors on the stage and actively implicate the reader in the text. The reader is tested and involved by rhetorical questions and humorous remarks. She must also be alert, for it is often not clear who is saying what: Freud, Cixous and in which role? The text oscillates between direct speech (quotes often ironically attributed to one of Freud's alter egos), indirect speech (rendering and interpreting Freud's words and thoughts) to free indirect speech (indicated by rhetorical questions, ironical interjections, exclamations and ellipses). Colons are frequently used by the narrator to provide extra information regarding motivations that Freud cannot or does not want to reveal. As pointed out above, quotes of "The Uncanny" never include page references, and intertextual allusions are only rarely credited. While the positions are unclear, quotation marks and brackets indicate the presence of the skeptical narrator, who is always commenting, adding, and modifying from the margin, revealing her presence as director.

Finally, words or parts of sentences are lifted out of their context by means of italics. This typographical procedure serves a double function. It brings to mind the stage directions of a script, adding emphasis to the "conversation" and creating an overall impression of liveliness. Cixous is not only thinking with and for the reader; she even directs the voice with which to read. The procedure can also be related to the metaphor of the guideline, although the "keywords" cannot be understood in a hierarchical sense. The italics in the text mark a sequence of terms and phrases that receive their meaning belatedly by forming signifying chains that do not necessarily lead to the core of the text. No detail of the analysis is unimportant because the text resumes and displaces all elements. Thus, illustrations, anecdotes, or loose remarks are always fitted into new patterns, in the same way that the images and metaphors are interchangeable and multifunctional.

The textual coherence is hard to describe because of its unstable character. Connections that are created are immediately disconnected and dispelled because they are not held together by a common denominator or a core. The image of "the body of examples" expresses the aporia of such a textual structure.

> Still another knot of examples: will the weaving of references never end? Freud proceeds with excuses and additions: a little more; this is not the last; another instance; that is not enough. A moving anguish emanates from these incessant additions. The text does not want to hold together; the demonstration becomes troubled, hardens, and doubles with thickness. Thus, quickly, another knot: he who casts an evil eye, plus epilepsy, plus madness, plus the Middle Ages and demonology, plus the diabolism of a person (Mephisto) and the difficult patient; and I am skipping; "dismembered limbs, a severed head . . . feet which dance by themselves." Still another example, and at the same time the metaphor of this great Gathering in which the members form an always dismembered unity, each one preserving an independent activity. Multitude. At the end, *the figure* ["figure" can be figure, form, or face] of a *body* [corps] *of examples* emerges but without "revealing" itself, figure of figures, a body which returns to its *dislocation*. It is this "body" which Freud "crowns" (by the crown, appeal to a head that is not there) with the supremely disquieting idea: the phantasm of the man buried alive: his (absent) textual head, shoved back into the maternal body, a horrible, voluptuous pleasure. (Cixous 1976, 544, trans. mod.)

This substantial quote is one of many junctions where various semantic fields and discursive strategies converge. The passage treats a specific part of "The Uncanny" in which Freud sets out to clarify the link between the uncanny and the return of surmounted primitive fears with a number of examples, leading to the desire to return to the womb.

The example of the animated body parts is highlighted in the enumeration by means of quotation marks and functions as a metaphor for Freud's entire text, "this great gathering in which members form an always dismembered unity." The classic analogy of text and body parodies the Christian image of the Church as a body with Christ as

the head, as well as the "corpus" of examples in scientific research. A corpus is an artificial, dead construct, a closed, finite collection of data isolated from their normal environment, in order to be taken apart, analyzed and reassembled in one conclusion or hypothesis. In the corpus of "The Uncanny," the various elements resist this unifying, leveling treatment. The fragmented collection of body parts evokes the Lacanian "fragmented body," i.e., the bodily experience of an infant before the mirror stage and the process of identity formation have set in.

The sources of Freud's strange pleasure in accumulating examples are thus multiple: the forepleasure of aesthetic composition, infantile sexual pleasure, and the dark pleasure of the repetition compulsion. The connotation of the pre-oedipal fragmented body is reinforced by the references to intra-uterine existence and to birth (and death). When the textual "baby" is born, the head is missing. There is no nucleus or keystone to unite the whole under the hegemony of one hierarchical idea expressed by the title.[45] Although the title of the essay suggests such a nucleus, this is but an illusion, a trick to keep up scientific appearances: "Just as the still undetermined *Unheimliche* benefits from the status of concept, so too is the non-scientific clothed with the dignity of the scientific" (Cixous 1976, 529). The image of the head is associated with the intellect, rationality, and control, exactly the things lacking in Freud's essay, as has been made clear in the many words connoting control. Last but not least, the image of the headless figure—the *acéphale* is an intertextual allusion to Georges Bataille's notorious journal and cult, and to Derrida's "The Double Session," the main source of inspiration for "Fiction and its Phantoms."

4.4.4. Cixous and Derrida: The Uncanny and/as Theory of Fiction

In "The Double Session," Derrida reads Stéphane Mallarmé and Plato, posing questions about the nature of literature, reading and the dialogical text, conceptuality, mimesis, the relation between reality, fiction and truth. From Mallarmé, Derrida borrows the notion of "the double session" to indicate what takes place in the space of the "between" (also expressed by the image of the *hymen*) where the truth of literature resides according to and against the inquiries of philosophy, psychoanalysis, or theory.[46] When reading Derrida's text, it becomes clear that "Fiction and its Phantoms" is very much motivated by the same concerns and metaphors—reading, conceptuality, motifs like the double and doubling, the text as labyrinth, theatre, sexual difference, the text without core, etc.—to the extent that it could be

read as an elaboration of Derrida's comments on "The Uncanny" in three footnotes.

In a first footnote, Derrida refers to "The Uncanny" in the context of the "undecidability" related to the word "hymen" in Mallarmé's text. This "undecidability" is set apart from other forms of lexical ambivalence, e.g., the ambivalence of words containing their opposite term described in "The Antithetical Meanings of Primal Words."

> We are referring less to the text in which Freud is directly inspired by Abel (1910) than to *Das Unheimliche* (1919), of which we are here, in sum, proposing a rereading. We find ourselves constantly being brought back to that text by the paradoxes of the double and of repetition, the blurring of the boundaries lines between "imagination" and "reality," between the "symbol" and the "thing it symbolizes" [. . .] The references to Hoffmann and to the fantastic, the considerations on the *double meaning* of words [. . .] (to be continued). (Derrida 1981, 220 n32)

Derrida highlights the themes of doubling, repetition, and the effacement of limits in relation to literature, particularly fantastic literature, and to language in general (the lexical part of "The Uncanny"). The exact passage to which Derrida refers emphasizes precisely the confusion arising when the boundaries between fantasy and reality begin to blur and contains the enigmatic phrase: "when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes" (Freud 1919h, 244). The undecidability highlighted by Derrida is the ambivalence between fiction and reality, or between literary language and referential language. Early on in "Fiction and its Phantoms," the word "undecidable" occurs with reference to the very same passage.[47]

The idea is further elaborated by Cixous who points out the implications for the reception of the conceptual status of the word "unheimlich."

> Freud considers the *Unheimliche* as, at the same time, a "domain" and a "concept," an elastic designation. The fact of the matter is that the "domain" remains indefinite; the concept is without any nucleus: the *Unheimliche* presents itself, first of all, only on the fringe of something else. Freud relates it to other concepts which resemble it (fright,

> fear, anguish): it is a unit in the "family" but is not really a member of the family. Freud declares that it is certain that the use of *Unheimlich* is uncertain. The indefiniteness is part and parcel of the "concept." (Cixous 1976, 528)

If the uncanny is a concept "whose entire denotation is a connotation" (ibid.), it only refers to other concepts; nothing in reality corresponds to it. It will be Cixous's claim that the meaning, the truth of the uncanny can only be rendered by fiction. Freud turns to literature to find answers to psychoanalytic questions and subordinates it: "Literature is the objective of psychoanalytic inquiry. A hierarchy is created through the systems of priorities" (Cixous 1976, 529). The most elaborate example is Freud's analysis of "The Sandman." According to Cixous, Freud's summary is not a mere paraphrase nor is his analysis of the story an objective interpretation. Freud appropriates the story and manipulates it to arrive at a conclusion already determined beforehand: "Freud delights in having to rewrite the story structurally, beginning with the center designated as such a priori" (Cixous 1976, 533). Apart from being biased and premeditated, the summary is also a violation of the text. This is demonstrated in the transition of words like "rewrite—reclose—condense—displace—redistribute" into semantic field of mutilation "intrude—efface—diminishing the texture—trimming—eradicate—prune—cut" and coercion and suppression: "oblige—prohibit—constraint—decree—reduction to a rhetorical matter—exclude" (Cixous 1976, 533–534). The signifying chain highlighted by the insistent use of italics gradually builds up the tension and the violence. Particularly the terms related to pruning and cutting prepare for the notion of castration.

Freud attributes the uncanniness of the story to the figure of the sandman and more specifically to the fear of losing the eyes, which is interpreted as a symbolic displacement of castration anxiety. Cixous demonstrates how the notion of castration, introduced as final interpretant of the story, does not explain anything.

> What lies on the other side of castration? "No other meaning" than the fear (the resistance) of castration. It is this *no-other-meaning* (*Keine andere Bedeutung*) which presents itself anew (despite our wish to underplay it) in the infinite game of substitutions, through which what constitutes the elusive movement of fear returns and eclipses itself again. It is this dodging from fear to fear, the unthinkable secret since it does not open on any other meaning: its "agitation"

> (Hoffmann would say "*Unruhe*") is its affirmation. (Cixous 1976, 536, trans. modified)[48]

When Freud thinks he has solved the enigma of the uncanny by the introduction of castration, he is both wrong and right at the same time, for neither the content of the castration complex nor of any other notion belonging to psychoanalytic conceptual apparatus completely covers the essence of the uncanny. In the endless deferral of one Freudian concept to another, something always escapes. In the reductive and violent gesture of wanting to reduce the specificity of each case to one denominator, the uncanny is the excess of meaning, the particularity of a term that escapes a generalizing, scientific approach. The "agitation" that arises forces Freud to look elsewhere for additional concepts and hypotheses.

This process is also at stake in the third and most elaborate footnote devoted to "The Uncanny" in "The Double Session" where Derrida relates his unfinished thought on lexical ambivalence to the notion of dissemination. The endless deferral of the signifier is a consequence of doubling and repetition and also of castration. Castration signals the absence of a "transcendent signified" (Cixous) or an "originary signified" (Derrida) that would complete the process of signification.

> No more than can castration, dissemination—which entails, entrains, "inscribes," and relaunches castration—can never become an originary, central, or ultimate signified, the place proper to truth. On the contrary, dissemination represents the affirmation of this nonorigin, the remarkable empty locus of a hundred blanks no meaning can be ascribed to, in which supplements and substitution games are multiplied ad infinitum. In *The Uncanny*, Freud—here more than ever attentive to undecidable ambivalence, to the play of the double, to the endless exchange between the fantastic and the real, the "symbolized" and the "symbolizer," to the process of interminable substitution—can, without contradicting this play, have recourse both to castration anxiety, behind which no deeper secret (*kein tieferes Geheimnis*), no other meaning (*keine andere Bedeutung*) would lie hidden, and to the substitutive relation (*Ersatzbeziehung*) itself, for example between the eye and the male member. Castration is that nonsecret of seminal division that breaks into substitution. (Derrida 1981, 268 n67)

In combination with castration (the absence of deeper meaning and the endless game of substitution), the lexical ambivalence of the word "unheimlich" is radicalized to "undecidable ambivalence." Both Derrida and Cixous stress the fact that the uncanny functions as a metaphor for the text itself.[49]

The concept of the uncanny arises throughout the various attempts to reconcile symbol and symbolized, i.e., signifier and signified. The tension between the two makes symbolization a highly ambivalent endeavor, for the symbol can never fully coincide with the content of what should be symbolized. The meaning of the concept of the uncanny is a process, an infinite semiosis. This insight fundamentally staggers the entire conceptual apparatus activated to describe the uncanny: the distinction between life and fiction, the stories (re)constructed by psychoanalysis on the basis of explanatory narratives such as the Oedipal myth and the castration complex. Again and again this apparatus is revealed as symbolic and therefore as a fiction that never fully corresponds to a hidden truth, i.e., life and the uncanny as they really are. In "Fiction and its Phantoms," Cixous personalizes this frame of reference. Freud's theory of the role of castration and repression in producing the uncanny is essentially correct insofar as it is the repression of Freud's own castration, of his own impotence to provide a satisfactory explanation. This repression is what provokes the sensation of the uncanny and unwittingly reveals its "meaning": "the effect of uncanniness reverberates (rather than emerges), for the word is a relational signifier. Unheimlich is in fact a composite that infiltrates the interstices of the narrative and points to gaps we need to explain" (Cixous 1976, 536), The uncanny is described as a resonance, in which there is neither origin nor end. It is a by-product, like the shadow or double, never a single, identifiable thing or meaning.

In this quality of by-product or effect, the uncanny comes quite close to what Freud in his early work on art called the "bonus of the seduction" (Verlockungsprämie). (See also Royle 2006, 238–240.) This notion is suggested by Derrida in his second footnote on the uncanny.

> We will attempt to show elsewhere that this type of thematicism has as its very vocation to be eudemonistic or hedonistic (and vice versa), and that it is not in principle incompatible with Freud's psychoanalysis of the work of art, at least in the guise in which it appeared in the essays prior to *The Uncanny* (1919) and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) [. . .]. Freud acknowledges that he is going beyond the formal limits of the text toward the theme (*Stoff*), or

> the author, and that that entails a number of inconsistencies. He analyzes the work as a *means* in the service of the pleasure principle *alone*: situating it between a preliminary pleasure (*Vorlust*) or bonus of seduction (*Verlockungsprämie*) produced by the formal achievement and a final pleasure linked to the releasing of the tensions (*Der Dichter* . . . in fine). This does not mean that after 1919–20 such propositions will be entirely superseded, but they nevertheless will seem to circulate within a modified frame of reference. The problematics of displacement still remains to be constituted. (Derrida 1981, 248n 52)

In this quote, Derrida sketches the outlines of a Freudian poetics that takes into account the second phase in Freud's thinking (that will be worked out most rigorously by Kofman, see Chapter 5). The notion of dissemination makes it possible to relate the notion of endless repetition and its mysterious pleasure to form and to language. The notion of "seduction" provides a possibility not to lose track of the fundamental connection between Eros and the death drive. Derrida concludes his third and last footnote on the uncanny on castration and dissemination (Derrida 1981, 268, n67, quoted above) by reminding us that Freud questions his own theory of the uncanny by referring to fiction, quoting from the third part of the essay. However, at this point, Derrida abruptly breaks off his argument with the phrase "(to be continued)" and goes on to the case of Wolf Man.

In "Fiction and its Phantoms," Cixous takes over the baton. Freud's interest in the uncanny is repeatedly described in terms of seduction.

> There arises here the mystery of literary creation and the secret of that enviable power possessed by its creator who manages to seduce us. More precisely, this is what fascinates Freud: "the freedom of the author, the privilege accorded to fiction in order to evoke and inhibit" the emotions and phantasms of the reader, the power to lift censorship. Therein resides the motivation behind these many attempts at initiating a theory of this power, under the term of the first seduction or of preliminary pleasure: the theory of pleasure which is frequently derived from some adjacent development. (Cixous 1976, 527–528)

The secret that attracts Freud both as subject and as direct object and that repels him is the power of an author to seduce and manipulate.

The scientist lacks this because he is bound to the laws of reality and logic and because the additional pleasure that can be provoked in literature through "formal success" is repressed. In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," formal pleasure is seen as a preparation or foreplay for a more profound pleasure related to content. Derrida calls this privileged association of pleasure and content "eudemonistic or hedonistic thematism." Following Derrida's cue, Cixous goes back to Freud's early theory of creation and foregrounds the importance of identification (Cixous 1976, 528). The formal pleasure entails that in fiction the "liberation of another pleasure" can be represented. By identifying with another subject, by taking on a role within the world of fiction, the ego can circumvent the censorship of consciousness and can gratify his desires. However, Cixous agrees with Derrida: "if the theory of the first seduction appears to rest primarily on a hedonist 'thematism,' it overlooks—and this displaces the theory—what no theme can recover, and this is precisely the *Unheimliche*" (Cixous 1976, 528). The uncanny confronts Freud with the limitation of his theory because it cannot be reduced to a theme.

The importance of form and its inextricable link to content is what Freud experiences when he takes on the role of writer in another attempt to discover the secret of the uncanny. In his essay, he tries to write the story of the uncanny in order to find the truth. Thus, he reads the story of "The Sandman" by rewriting it, but he fails because he mistakes the author's power for control over the content or meaning. Pruning the structure, leaving out the "pantomime, the charm, the theatre of Hoffmann" (Cixous 1976, 534), he also eliminates the uncanny, which is "savage." In the cases of the double and the revenant, however, Freud goes one step further and begins to abandon the laws of reason and scientific writing. Gradually, in "The Uncanny," Freud no longer confines himself to the limits of an existing text. He takes the liberty of choosing a number of examples, ordering them into a pattern that leads him to the primitive roots of the uncanny. In doing so, Freud produces a more daring, speculative kind of theory and takes on a more creative, playful attitude toward writing. Even if this kind of reasoning is ultimately as unsuccessful as the reading of "The Sandman," it does introduce another kind of pleasure that is attributed to an hitherto unknown source: the repetition compulsion.

As Derrida pointed out in "The Double Session," doubling and repetition, indications of the death drive and the second topic have major implications for the theory of the bonus of seduction. Derrida clearly situates "The Uncanny" and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* on

the edge of a new kind of reasoning and suggests an intimate link between the displacement (not invalidation) of the primary seduction and the introduction of the principle of doubling and repetition in "The Uncanny." When Cixous deals with the passages on the repetition compulsion as well as the repetition in Freud's text, she introduces the notion of vibration (also present in the "Prediction") to describe the working of the Unheimliche.

> Is this repetition? Yes, but displaced by Freud in the same circle growing tighter and tighter toward a decentered and receding target. Insistent: it is the insistence of the *Heimliche* which provokes the *Unheimliche* in the same manner. Insistence of the familiar gives rise to what is uncanny, in the long run. Unheimliche: the intensity of the vibration which passes over to (rather than causes) the same turn. What "made" this *Unheimliche* something else is nothing new or foreign but simply the repressive process. The vibration changes the burden of the signs. (Cixous 1976, 542)

The effect or intensity described above is created through an endless process of displacement of the signifier. This creates a tension because meaning always rests on the repression of a gap, but at the same time, it creates a surplus, a promise. This is the point where writing, repression, and the return of the repressed transform into fiction. Thus, the effect of the uncanny is to a large extent tributary to another source of pleasure than the earlier bonus of seduction. Moreover, it invalidates the distinction between form and content, for the uncanny can neither be completely recovered in terms of meaning or content, nor be completely separated from it. The tension between the strange and the familiar is related to the peculiar relation between fiction and reality, which is no longer articulated in terms of opposition but in terms of implication and paradox.

All three, then, Derrida, Cixous, and Todorov, establish a link between the uncanny and fantastic literature, mainly through the example of "The Sandman." Moreover, Derrida and Cixous concentrate on the third part of "The Uncanny" to pose the question "what is literature, what is fiction?" Like the fantastic, the uncanny can only be described in terms of an effect/affect, experienced by the reader.

> [. . .] We cannot help but think that Freud has hardly anything to envy in Hoffmann for in his "art or craftiness" in provoking the *Unheimliche* effect. If we experience uneasiness

> in reading Freud's essay, it is because the author is his double in a game that cannot be dissociated from his own text: it is such that he manages to escape at every turn of the phrase. (Cixous 1976, 547)

If Hoffmann is the double of Freud, the double of the uncanny is fiction. Both for Todorov and Cixous, the uncanny, the fantastic, and fiction in general have to do with limits, with paradox, and with the representation of the unrepresentable.

And thus, we find ourself facing the romantic problem also posed by Prawer when he started working on the uncanny and German poetry in the early 1960s: wanting to describe the indescribable amounts to denying/repressing its indescribable nature. In the end, the answer to the question of the uncanny comes down to the question: "What is fiction in reality? This is a question which haunts the accesses the Freud's text, but without entering them" (Cixous 1976, 546). Fiction is another reality where the unrepresentable or the repressed can be represented, but Freud's analysis remains stuck in representation and this is the reason why Freud cannot capture the essence of fiction. Much more than Todorov, who privileges the text and the reader, Cixous focuses on the aspect of literary creation, which is linked to power, liberty, and life. The power of the creative writer, so envied by Freud, is of a totally different nature than the power of society or science. It is a power that not merely transgresses but transcends the laws of reality and society. Fiction entails a victory over death not because it abolishes death, but because it refuses death as the absolute limit. It ignores death.

The figure of the revenant—a stock character of the supernatural—shows this paradoxical situation. The ghost is the most immediate representation of the uncanny as return of the repressed because it represents the return of death—"signifier without signified," the ultimate secret—in life. Because death is itself radically unrepresentable (it is only known by the dead), the uncanniness of the ghost is situated in the transition of life and death, on the limit between the two conditions which fades and dissolves: "What is intolerable is that the ghost erases the limit which exists between two states, neither alive nor dead; passing through, the dead man returns in the manner of the repressed. It is this coming back which makes the ghost what he is, just as it is the return of the Repressed that inscribes the repression" (Cixous 1976, 543). The same ambivalent ontological status between animate and inanimate is attributed to the doll Olympia, who

is foregrounded by Cixous in her essay. Both Olympia and the ghost will be characteristic for the power of fiction to create artificial life that is neither real nor unreal, neither alive nor dead.

The reader's role in this is the double of the author, but as a double, the action of reading is never a perfect repetition. It entails deviation and displacement and sets in motion the endless game of dissemination, which is not halted by any ultimate, deeper meaning.

> It is also and especially because the *Unheimliche refers* to no more profound secret than itself: every pursuit produces its own cancellation and every text dealing with death is a text which returns. The repression of death or of castration betrays death (or castration) everywhere. To speak of death is to die. To speak of castration is either to surmount it (thus to cancel it, to castrate it) or to effect it. "Basically" Freud's adventure in this text is consecrated to the very paradox of writing which stretches its signs in order to "manifest" the secret it "contains." (Cixous 1976, 547)

Throughout the essay, both Freud and the reader experience "disquietness, incertitude, strangeness . . ." resulting in "uneasiness," failure, and disappointment. The sense of displeasure is mainly related to a loss of control and mastery: neither as analyst nor author is Freud able to master the uncanny and to manipulate the effect/affect. This coincides with a feeling of pleasure and thrill resulting from the chase rather than the catch. The problems arise when Freud wants to translate his intuition and experience of the trajectory into knowledge. Each attempt to fix the meaning of writing entails the death of it. This radical attitude brings Cixous closer to Vax than to Todorov because it precludes the unifying perspective of poetics.

In Cixous's conception of fiction, signification arises elsewhere, in a "non-space." Fiction is re-presentation in the sense of "making present again." What is made present is not the return of the repressed as representation of an unchanged and predetermined meaning but, on the contrary, a meaning that has never been present, that is always repressed. Fiction escapes theory because the unrepresentable only hints at its meaning without ever giving it away.

> So, of the *Unheimliche* (and its double, fiction) we can only say that it never completely disappears . . . that it "represents" that which in solitude, silence, and darkness will

> (never) be presented to you. Neither real nor fictitious, "fiction" is a secretion of death, an anticipation of nonrepresentation, a doll, a hybrid body composed of language and silence that, in the movement which turns it and which it turns, invents doubles, and death. (Cixous 1976, 548)

This concluding quote, a commentary on the last lines of Freud's essay, can be compared to Todorov's final description of fiction's precarious existence on the verge of the impossible. For Cixous, fiction is a "secretion of death," a by-product coming from the same secret source, mostly a hybrid, escaping all classification and power. The image of the game or dance of liminal creatures like ghosts, dolls, and doubles emphasizes the creativity, the playful aspect of fiction as well as its endless oscillation on the limit between life and death.

Despite obvious differences in tone, focus, and scope of their studies, Derrida, Todorov, and Cixous have lastingly revolutionarized the discourse on the uncanny by several innovations and thus tipped off the conceptualization process of the uncanny. Like his predecessors, Todorov relates the Freudian uncanny to the genre of the fantastic, but his explanation of the role of psychoanalysis and historical development of the genre is more sophistaticated and far-reaching than earlier suggestions by Penzoldt or Vax. Moreover, the supernatural and the fantastic are attributed a kind of exemplary value for the workings of literary language and fiction. Thus, the uncanny, while remaining an applied concept, acquires a much broader scope and exemplary value. By linking the supernatural, the fantastic, and the uncanny, Todorov also paves the way for the distinction between literary effect, genre, and modus that will be elaborated by later theorists.

Still, it is undeniably Cixous's deconstructive reading of "The Uncanny" that has been responsible for the uncanny's breakthrough.[50] Whereas Todorov implicitly personified the fantastic as the object of research, Cixous emphatically and very rhetorically focuses on Freud as persona, in different roles of obsessed researcher, sexist prude tempted by the forbidden, and reader who secretly envies the literary powers of the writers he admires. She does this in a complex rhetorical strategy of doubling that creates a form of baroque parody different from Todorov's cool and controlled irony. Cixous stresses the unicity of the literary text against the generalizing "scientific" perspective and in doing so, she exaggerates the seriousness and suppresses the lucidity of Freud's text in order to parody and deconstruct it. Most importantly, she introduces the notions of "seduction and temptation"

into the conception of the uncanny through the pervasive images of suspense, the thrill of the chase, and the mysterious and erotic attraction exerted by the uncanny (a new, nonreligious version of the old notion of "temptation").

Cixous's main source of inspiration in "Fiction and its Phantoms" is Derrida. In her reading, she meticulously elaborates his suggestions in "The Double session." Intellectual uncertainty (close to Todorov's readerly hesitation) and ambivalence are related to dissemination, repetition, the return of the repressed, and the mysterious workings of the death drive combined with Eros. In Cixous's reading, the uncanny is paradigmatic for the enigmatic attraction of fiction as well as for its disturbing potential to create things that are ontologically ambivalent, like the doll Olympia, and therefore unbearable from the point of science and Western phallogocentric metaphysics. Cixous's essay, finally, is not just a virtuoso deconstructive reading accidentally included in the volume *Prénoms de Personne*, it programmatically outlines a theory of fiction. The uncanny is more than a literary effect; it is the effect par excellence that incorporates and reveals the "essence" of literature at the end of the twentieth century and that places it at the heart of philosophy or theory.

In terms of the conceptualization of the uncanny, there is no hierarchy between these texts, leading up to Cixous as the "crown" to the work. Nor are the three texts discussed here in any way "better" than other brilliant readings of "The Uncanny" produced around the same time, most notably by Kofman, Rey, and Weber (Neil Hertz and Friedrich Kittler follow slightly later). However, the texts of Derrida, Cixous, and Todorov have influenced a large international audience. In spite of their obvious differences, they interact in a specific climate and bring into prominence the elements that will dominate the conceptualization of the uncanny in various domains in the next decades. In combination with, and reinforced by, the steadily increasing amount of readings of "The Uncanny" and applications of the concept, they allow for the uncanny's rise as an appropriate trope for the intellectual and artistic climate of the post-revolutionary 1970s and 1980s in Western culture: a period marked by late capitalism, the increasing mediatization and virtualization of society and rapid globalization, as well as by confusion, ambivalence, nihilism, and a return of dark romanticism.

5

The Uncanny

A Late Twentieth-Century Concept

5.1. The Canonization of the Uncanny

The conceptualization of the uncanny takes off simultaneously in the French and English tradition in the mid-1970s; somewhat later, German and other languages follow. As we saw in the previous chapters, from the very start the conceptualization transgresses the disciplinary boundaries of literary studies, psychoanalysis, and aesthetics and fundamentally partakes of all three domains. Whereas some questions raised by Freud's essay remain prominent until well into the twenty-first century, in the 1990s the psychoanalytic-literary framework that first shaped the uncanny becomes less predominant in the discussion as the concept disseminates into a broad range of disciplines and fields that entails new questions and perspectives. At the same time, this dissemination coincides with a stabilization and relative reduction of meaning when the concept is canonized. An obvious sign of both its acceptance and its fashionable status is the occurrence of "uncanny" or "unheimlich" in titles and subtitles of articles and books. Another striking phenomenon is the fact that quite a few of the authors who studied the essay or elaborated the concept keep returning to it throughout their oeuvre. We have seen this first in the case of Prawer; the same phenomenon can be observed in the oeuvres of many of the "discoverers" of Freud, such as Kofman, Rey, Weber, and in later generations, Wright, Allan Lloyd Smith, Royle, and Wolfreys. Some authors or schools become almost synonymous with the uncanny: Kofman's title for her essay on Derrida, "Un philosophe unheimlich," is telling, as is the epithet "uncanny critics" for American deconstructionists of the Yale school. Finally, Todorov, Cixous, Weber, Terry Castle, and Vidler become standard references in the discourse on the uncanny next to Freud.

The growing popularity of the term creates the need to quickly find information: apart from in titles, the word also appears as keyword in indices, either under the heading "Freud" or separately, as "uncanny," "Uncanny, the," or "unheimlich," which is often further specified. As a keyword or tag, the term or the title of Freud's essay is included in abstracts and bibliographical search instruments. In several accounts of psychoanalysis and literature, "The Uncanny" is increasingly acknowledged as a standard text, generally at least a part of a chapter is devoted to the essay.[1] In different fields, thematic issues of journals are devoted to the uncanny—*Research in Phenomenology*, *Angelaki,* and *Paradoxa*—introducing the uncanny in the fields of architecture theory and deconstruction, radical philosophy, and finally popular culture and genre studies. The most telling sign of canonization is the inclusion of the term in lexicons, glossaries, and search indexes, and of the essay in anthologies. The most evident efforts to canonize the essay have occurred in the fields of literary, cultural, or aesthetic theory where the essay (or excerpts from it) is included in printed and online anthologies and the uncanny has become a standard concept in various lexicons.[2] The orientation and the selective bibliography of the entries may substantially vary, but the most common links established are either to Todorov's theory of the fantastic or to deconstructive-poststructuralist readings of the concept, always with Freud as the common denominator. Moreover, the essay, or parts of it, is also included in general anthologies such as Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan's *Literary Theory. An Anthology* (1998), Vincent B. Leitch's *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2001), and Gilda Williams's *The Gothic* (2007).

Two things are striking in this enumeration. First, in the 1990s, the emphasis shifts from "literary" to "cultural," but overall the canonization remains rooted in "theory" situated at the intersection of several domains: psychoanalysis, literature and philosophy, visual studies, the social sciences, and architecture. More specifically, the uncanny belongs to a body of concepts and texts in which a poststructuralist view of literature, art, and society is articulated that is interchangeable between disciplines. The (post)structuralist questioning of the ideological and scientific status of theoretical discourses like psychoanalysis and philosophy coincides with an explosion of theory, which serves as the legitimization of a practice and as an index of autonomy and professionalization. "Theory" functions as a "common currency" in the humanities even if the notion is by no means univocal. Second, as an unconcept, the uncanny haunts conceptuality and infects it with fiction, while maintaining enough substance to travel among

disciplines in the wake of a larger discursive vessel, i.e., the common frame of reference that psychoanalysis, no matter how modified, still provides. The fact that the uncanny was not a major psychoanalytical concept had a double advantage: it was not so much tainted by the criticisms against psychoanalysis and could be rediscovered and reclaimed in the wake of the poststructuralist predilection for the marginal and the forgotten. Under the influence of deconstruction and poststructuralism, conceptual ambiguity and vagueness have been situated at the very core of the definition of the concept. The uncanny paradoxically signifies the very problem of fixed meanings, of definitions and univocal meanings, of concepts and science. As Susan Bernstein (2004) puts it, the uncanny is ambulatory: it cannot be pinned down.[3] However, this is but one side of the coin. The lack of clarity in Freud's essay goes hand in hand with a wealth of examples and perspectives that have been keenly explored and developed within various schools and disciplines. Indeed, it is the "author-function" of Freud—his name as a kind of label—that puts a boundary on the endless semiosis and guarantees a sufficiently solid framework to unify the conceptual dissemination.[4] The conceptualization of the uncanny clearly shows that no matter how much fiction is allowed to circulate in and haunt conceptuality, the author-function of Freud as guarantee for this dissemination is perhaps the one thing that is never really questioned—even when the origins of the uncanny are pushed back in time—precisely because it provides the solid base to support both intra- and intersystemic dissemination.

5.2. A Tradition of Rereadings of "The Uncanny"

A striking phenomenon in the canonization process is the numerous "rereadings" of "The Uncanny" for which Cixous's essay stands as a model. Within the different approaches and perspectives, a number of recurring features can be distinguished. First, many of the rereadings stage a confrontation between "The Uncanny" and Hoffmann's "The Sandman." Wright specifies two interrelated classes of omissions in Freud's interpretation, one regarding literature, the other regarding psychoanalysis: "Freud has ignored the narrative strategies and textual devices employed consciously and textual devices (consciously/unconsciously) by Hoffmann" (Wright 1998, 131). More concretely, critics reproach Freud which he leaves out or misinterprets elements of the story, ranging from characters like the doll Olympia, the end of the story, to structural elements like the role of the narrator and

the epistolary structure. Alternative interpretations for the story in terms of psychosis, aggression, the family secret, or narcissism have been proposed. Finally, the importance of psychoanalytic concepts in Freud's interpretation like anxiety, narcissism, death, perception, doubling, splitting and repetition, and the castration hypothesis are reinterpreted, for instance, from a Lacanian perspective, and reinforced with other arguments and motifs from "The Uncanny." Good summaries of the most important rereadings, although with a strong Anglo-Saxon bias, are found in Chisholm (1992), Wright (1998), Robin Lydenberg (1997), and Royle (2003).

Freud's essay also serves to construct a post-Freudian theory of fiction, of writing and reading in terms of effect. In the previous chapter, we saw how the link between the uncanny as literary effect and the notion of "preliminary pleasure" was elaborated by Derrida and Cixous. In the same period, the most important work on Freud's aesthetics was done by philosopher Kofman, a student of Deleuze and Derrida, in *The Childhood of Art* (*L'enfance de l'art*, 1970). *Four Analytic Novels* (*Quatre romans analytiques*, 1973) contains a long essay on "The Uncanny": "Le Double e(s)t le diable." This deconstructive close reading of Hoffmann's story and Freud's analysis of it is one of the rare studies to focus on, among other things, the theme of the occult in "The Sandman" and on the role of the double. Already in *The Childhood of Art,* Kofman conceives of the relationship between hero and author in terms of the double. As a narcissistic projection of the author's self, motivated by the author's unconscious drives and desires, the hero and by extension the literary creation serve a double purpose. On the one hand, doubling is a way to establish and fortify the author's identity a protection against death. On the other hand, it is a proof of the frailty and fragmentation of the subject, which is already divided from within.

> Doubles are consitutive of the true being of the artist and his identity, because what he does in doubling himself, in repeating and representing himself, implies a non-presence to himself, an originary dissatisfaction, immanent death in life, simple and complete absence of origin. (Kofman 1970, 162, my trans.)

The authorial "I" is a split subject that cannot be seen as independent of the literary work and does not exist without it. Likewise, the reader identifies with the heroes of a story in a doubling game. This process takes place in the secure environment of art mimicking life

and therefore allows for the gratification of repressed desires and impulses without facing the consequences. Still, the status of fiction is not just imaginary. Whereas secondary narcissism explains the process of identification in terms of projection and incorporation both on the side of the writer and of the reader, primary narcissism is associated with surmounted primitive beliefs like the omnipotence of thought and projection underlying magical practices. As the double of lived experience, mimetic narrative echoes birth and death, and the wandering in between that constitutes life. Art as the double of life, in its expulsion or phantasmatic victory over death, precisely points at death and reveals the fundamental complicity between death and culture. According to Lloyd Smith in *Uncanny American Fiction. Medusa's Face* (1989), the text is not a faithful reproduction or mimesis of reality, it is the representation of a fundamental absence or repression.

> Writing itself is uncanny: the generation of the uncanny in fiction is often at the point when writing bends back upon itself, to observe its own processes, or to dislocate the narrative by the inclusion of another writing within it. (Lloyd Smith 1989, ix)

Toward the end of the twentieth century, some of the more controversial aspects of Freud's work that were for a long time ignored, such as his interest in primitive cultures, the occult, and telepathy, are rehabilitated in the theory of literature and even science.[5] Lehmann for instance elaborates a conception of art as magic, borrowed from *Totem and Taboo*. The idea of the artist's manipulation of the fictional world in "The Uncanny" is linked with the notion of the artist as "magician," which is a relic of the ancient technique of magic (Lehmann 1989, 759). This fits in with a contemporary poetics of the uncanny in terms of shock. Unlike the sublime, aesthetic experiences like the uncanny and also Julia Kristeva's abject cannot be recuperated in terms of an idealistic discourse and take us back to our primitive, atavistic roots. Royle proposes Freud's conception of telepathy as an alternative for the idealistic, theological connotations of the narratological notion of omniscience.[6]

A second recurring motif in the rereadings of "The Uncanny" is rhetorics, more specifically the metaphoricity of Freud's language.[7] This aspect of Freudian theory has been emphasized and further explored in numerous readings in the late 1970s, early 1980s. In France, the work of Rey (Rey 1974a; 1974b and 1979) was groundbreaking even if it never really gained influence in the Anglo-Saxon

world. "The Uncanny" is a key reference in Rey's careful study of the subtleties of Freud's language, *Des mots à l'oeuvre*. This book inspired Normand to ascribe a special status to psychoanalytic language and to propose Freud's "theoretical fictions" as a model for a new conception of science that combines theory and praxis, and takes into account the ideological position of the researcher (see Chapter 1). The best-known essay addressing this theme is Hertz's virtuoso "Freud and the Sandman" (1977). Like Cixous, Hertz focuses on the persona and biography of Freud in "The Uncanny" and in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In many cases, this leads to speculation regarding the biographical motifs driving his quest, for instance uncertainty, misogyny, desire for mastery, and jealousy or anxiety of influence toward predecessors like Jentsch or Hoffmann. Hertz, however, places Freud's "anxiety of influence" in the larger context of a struggle with the figurativeness of language. Univocal, scientific definitions constantly have to repress their figurative nature in order to function (Hertz 1985, 300–302). Freud's insistence on the lexical ambivalence of the uncanny is perceived as exemplary for a new kind of concepts, advocated by late twentieth-century theory and aesthetics: ambivalent, open, disseminating, and functional.

In the second edition of *The Legend of Freud* that contains the seminal essay, "The Sideshow: or Remarks on a Canny Moment,"[8] Weber points out that the uncanny remains "marginal" in the sense that it operates in the margin of theoretical discourse, revealing and undermining its pretences (Weber 2000, 21). As a whole, the conceptualization process of the uncanny self-consciously reveals and questions the discursive mechanisms underlying concepts and conceptualization, such as the artificiality of origin, the metaphorical nature of concepts, the inherent fictional quality of psychoanalytic or theoretical discourse, the violence of interpretation and summary as rhetorical strategies, and the theatricality/performance of scientific discourse. (See also Royle, Patrick Mahoney, Bernstein, Wolfreys, and many others.)

A third strand in the rereadings of Freud and Hoffmann is the historicization. Both the essay and the concept are related to a specific historical and sociopolitical context. The first to do this was Prawer in his reading of "The Sandman" (1965). Media theorist Kittler focuses on the family structure in nineteenth-century bourgeois society from a Lacanian-Foucaldian perspective (Kittler 1977), and Dolar not only links the concept of the uncanny to the notion of "extimité," he also relates the concept to Enlightenment thought and modernity in his reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. An influential study in this respect

is Castle's *The Female Thermometre* (1995) that famously places the invention of the uncanny in eighteenth-century culture. This results in a number of studies focusing on the uncanny in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Others, like Michael Arnzen's *Paradoxa* issue "The Return of the Uncanny" and Jo Collins and John Jervis's *Uncanny Modernity. Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties* (2008) explicitly underscribe Castle's historical hypothesis, even if their collections focus on twentieth-century manifestations of the uncanny.

5.3. The Dissemination of the Uncanny

The concept of the uncanny is substantially enlarged by association with other concepts and by contact with other fields, sometimes far removed from its core domains. Film studies, architecture theory, anthropology, sociology and even, very recently, the field of robotics and artificial intelligence have all adopted and transformed the notion. Under the heading of dissemination, three related phenomena can be distinguished: the uncanny's association with related concepts, the discovery of non-Freudian conceptions of the term "unheimlich" in the wake of the uncanny, and the application of the uncanny to other fields and corpora. These encounters have in some cases resulted in substantial modifications of the concept signaled by a new translation of the term "unheimlich." As we have seen—most notably in the case of Prawer—all these forms of dissemination are part and parcel of the conceptualization process since the early stages, but the actual "phase" of dissemination can be situated in the late 1980s and 1990s when the uncanny becomes an omnipresent "travelling concept."

From a grammatical as well as from a semantic perspective, the uncanny belongs to the conceptual field of substantivized adjectives like the sublime, the numinous-daemonic, the grotesque, the fantastic, the gothic, the strange, and the abject on the one hand, and of more general aesthetic, political, psychological, and ontological categories like alienation, estrangement, and fear on the other hand. All these terms can at times be used as quasi-synonyms. Generally speaking, the dissemination of the uncanny in the twentieth century runs along two axes. The "postromantic/aesthetic" tradition emphasizes the semantic kernels of transcendence, the supernatural, and the occult. The "existential/post-Marxist" semantic line of alienation, strangeness, and angst will emphasize the uncanny's relation to society, politics, and ethics.

5.3.1. The Postromantic/Aesthetic Tradition

In aesthetics, the uncanny is often associated with the sublime and with romanticism. In the 1970s and 1980s, the interest in the sublime greatly increases and the uncanny follows suit. A key figure in this respect is Bloom, who polemically states that Freud was a "strong poet of the sublime" in the second period of his theory. Bloom's notion of the "negative sublime" is not based on a historical argument, like Prawer's (secularization), but on a specific psychoanalytic-deconstructive reasoning that directly ties in with the uncanny as "unconcept." In *Agon. Towards a Theory of Revisionism*, Bloom goes even further: "The Uncanny" is "the only major contribution that the twentieth century made to the aesthetics of the Sublime. [. . .] The Sublime, as I read Freud, is one of his major repressed concerns, and this literary repression on his part is a clue to what I take to be a gap in his theory of repression" (Bloom 1982, 101; see also Bloom 1981, 211–231). Freud's contribution to the aesthetics of the sublime is the idea that the sublime is based on repression. Hence, the uncanny can be conceived of as the "literary" or "negative Sublime" and be defined as "that mode in which the poet, while expressing previously repressed thought, desires or emotions, is able to continue to defend himself against his own created image by disowning it, a defense of un-naming it rather than naming it" (Bloom 1981, 108). Bloom's notion of the uncanny and the negative sublime, attained by negation of a predecessor, fits in his theory of anxiety of influence, according to which all strong poets must engage in a conscious or unconscious fight with an idealized predecessor. Authors must come to terms with the greatness of their models and repress it at the same time when aspiring for originality themselves. This can be done through several strategies: the specific strategy associated with the uncanny is kenosis or repetition and discontinuity (Bloom (1973) 1997, 77–92), the unconscious drive to repeat the example. Bloom's postromantic notion of anxiety of influence has subsequently been applied to the person of Freud in his struggles with Jentsch, Hoffmann, and others like Adler or Tausk, often to the extent of confusing the biographical and the literary persona.[9]

Whereas Bloom and his followers locate the uncanny on the side of the author, others look at it from the perspective of the reader. Lehmann also emphasizes the failure of language or signification in the experience of the sublime and the uncanny. He prefers the latter term for a contemporary aesthetics of the event. For Lehmann, the

traditional Kantian notion of the sublime already contained all the questions posed by contemporary art theory.

> Everything that motivates contemporary theory of art was already gathered in this scene: the quest for what happens to us in art (the reception); the suspension of conceptual orientation; the discontinuity between signifier and signified; the theme of the unlimited, the unformed, the abstract; the sudden "event" of a "shock." Still, in all this, an uncanniness is registered that has to be controlled by the rational work of the concept [of the sublime]. (Lehmann 1989, 757, my trans.)

The philosophical and theoretical elaboration of the concept of the sublime in the eighteenth and nineteenth century has robbed it of its effect of shock, the link with danger, anxiety, and the death drive. Lehmann sees the rise of the uncanny as an attempt to highlight, restore, and radicalize the disturbing quality of the sublime, without the second movement of neutralization. Thus, Lehmann infuses the avant-garde notion of "shock" into the concept of the sublime. More historical elaborations of the uncanny as a stage in the development of the concept of the sublime are found, for instance, in Joachim Von der Thüsen 1997 and Ellison 2001.

Another concept close to the uncanny is "the abject," elaborated by Kristeva. Kristeva clearly distinguishes the abject from the uncanny: the abject is a much more violent sensation, which has nothing to do with recognition of the familiar, but it also goes back to early stages of development (Kristeva 1982). The abject has become tied up with the conceptualization of the uncanny due to several reasons. As in "The Uncanny," Kristeva combines a psychoanalytical, anthropological, and aesthetic perspective in her analysis of the abject. Moreover, with the abject, Kristeva tries to explain a similar phenomenon: how something disgusting in reality can be attractive in art. Like the uncanny, the abject is related to the absence (or not-yet presence) of clear boundaries between object and subject. It is a borderline phenomenon, situated in the pre-oedipal stage of narcissism and in its phylogenetic equivalent, the cultural stage of animism. The Kristevan abject—also like the uncanny—cannot be completely controlled. Although it disgusts us and inspires horror, the abject continues to exert a fascination. Even if it escapes symbolic expression or sublimation, the abject is contained in taboos on the one hand and in art or culture on the other hand.

In genre studies—especially of the fantastic, fantasy, and horror—the abject is often intertwined with the uncanny, in order to explain the powerful effects and appeal of all genres that have to do with "a broader category of repulsion and distress, a variant of general feelings of dread and horror" (Hook 2003, 44). By emphasizing the primitive, atavistic, and bodily roots of the uncanny and the abject, the concepts are often strategically used in defenses of these popular or marginal genres by pointing out how they have always been a natural and, in fact, indispensable part of culture. Kristeva's notion of the abject comes close to Kayser's grotesque, which lost popularity in the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., Rosemary Jackson [1981], Michael O'Pray [1989], Lisa Starks [2002]) and to the category of the "monstrous" (e.g., Barbara Creed [1993 and 2005], Royle [2003]).

These concepts, and the genres associated with them, can be subsumed under the fantastic in the broadest sense of the word. In the 1980s and 90s, the Freudian uncanny is foregrounded in more radical readings of the genre of the fantastic in terms of subversive and revolutionary content. Because "fantasy in literature deals so blatantly and repeatedly with unconscious material that it seems rather absurd to try to understand its significance without some reference to psychoanalysis and the psychoanalytic readings of texts" (Jackson 1981, 6), Jackson develops a conceptual framework of the fantastic as a (transhistorical) mode rather than a genre. She examines the link between literature, reality, and imagination, and distinguishes between escapist fantasy, "art as compensation" and subversive fantasy, "art as estrangement." The latter entails a more subversive and attractive possibility, for it promises the radical disturbance of language, of the subject and society. The notion of the uncanny with its roots in animism on the one hand and the link with repression/suppression on the other provides the starting point for this conception.

> To introduce the fantastic is to replace familiarity, comfort, das *Heimlich*[*e*], with estrangement, unease, the uncanny. It is to introduce dark areas, of something completely other and unseen, the spaces outside the limiting frame of the "human" and the "real," outside the control of the "word" and the "look." (Jackson 1981, 43)

Others examine the connection between the fantastic, the arisal of the specular, and the spectacular in culture, situating the concept of the uncanny at the historical transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism.[10]

In the study of the fantastic in film studies the concept was first introduced by Prawer in *Caligari's Children: The Film as Tale of Terror* (1980), which contains the revised version of his "Apology." Paul Coates's *The Gorgon's Gaze* (1991) focuses on German expressionism. In two recent studies, Creed's *Phallic Panic: Film, Horror and the Primal Uncanny* (2005) and Robert Spadoni's *Uncanny Bodies* (2008), the uncanny has taken central stage. Especially noteworthy in Spadoni's book is the attention to sound as a source of the uncanny, as opposed to the predominance of the gaze and the visual in the discourse on the uncanny. Similar models of psychoanalytic and historical analysis have been worked out in studies of historical genres, movements, and phenomena in literature, film, and visual art, like the gothic, the detective story, and surrealism.[11] In the last decades of the twentieth century, the notion of the gothic gained in importance in the visual arts and in theory. Wolfreys and Royle examine the gothic motifs of haunting, the spectre, and doubling from a deconstructive perspective. The notion of spectrality is not only used to theorize the blurring of the limit between the animate and the inanimate, death and life, fiction and reality but also linked to the virtual media age at the end of the twentieth century (e.g., Weber 1996, Buse and Stott 1998, Wolfreys 2002, and Royle 2003).

Apart from content and motifs, the application of the uncanny is usually argued on historical grounds. In the case of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century corpora, the tension between rationalism and irrationalism in the Enlightenment and Romanticism and the aesthetics of the sublime are foregrounded. In twentieth-century culture, especially surrealism and modernism, the historical contiguity of the essay to specific aesthetic practices and theoretical discourses is emphasized.

> If there is a concept that comprehends surrealism, it must be contemporary with it, immanent to its field; and it is partly the historicity of this concept that concerns me here. I believe this concept to be the uncanny, that is to say, a concern with events in which repressed material returns in ways that disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms, and social order. In my argument the surrealists not only are drawn to the return of the repressed but also seek to redirect this return to critical ends. Thus I will claim that the uncanny is crucial to particular surrealist oeuvres as well as to general surrealist notions (e.g., the marvelous, convulsive beauty, and objective chance). In this respect the concept of the uncanny is not merely contemporaneous with

> surrealism, developed by Freud from concerns shared by the movement, but also indicative of many of its activities. Moreover, it resonates with the aforementioned notions, Marxian and ethnological, that inform surrealism, particularly its interest in the outmoded and "the primitive." (Foster 1993, xviii)

This results in a different conceptual construction of the uncanny, with Heidegger, Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, and Derrida as main sources of references, which emphasizes the connotation of "unfamiliar" rather than that "supernatural" and adds an existential and political dimension to the uncanny.

5.3.2. The Unhomely and Existential and Political Alienation

The basic Freudian definition of "the familiar that has become strange" cannot be disconnected from one of the most important concepts in many discourses of the twentieth century: alienation as an economic, political, psychological, and existential condition. Since the earliest theorizations of the Freudian concept in the 1960s, the link between the uncanny and alienation has been established on all these levels. Prawer's work was visionary in elaborating the historical, the economic, and the psychological dimensions of the uncanny, but the first real application of the uncanny in the context of Marxist alienation is a reading of Marx and Friedrich Engels's *Communist Manifesto* by Jeffrey Mehlman in *Revolution and Repetition*. *Marx/Hugo/Balzac* (1977). Following the oblique trail of the notions of the repetition compulsion and the uncanny, Mehlman tries to reveal what the texts repress in a series of repetitions and displacements. Mehlman focuses on the motif of the specter in the *Communist Manifesto* and relates it to Freud's uncanny. In this way, he announces Derrida's reading of the same text in *Specters of Marx* (1993) that notoriously redefined the uncanny in post-Marxist hauntology.

Before that, however, a serious attempt to explore the ethical-political possibilities of the uncanny in the context of the problem of foreigners in contempary Europe is Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* ([1988] 1994). Kristeva concludes her overview of historical representations of the stranger in Western literature and philosophy—ranging from Greek mythology, the Bible, Augustine, Dante, Montaigne, Hegel, Kant, and Freud—with a reading of "The Uncanny." In her view, the essay offers the keystone of a new ethics for dealing with contemporary problems in European society like racism, national-

ism, xenophobia. The experience of uncanniness teaches us that the stranger is not someone who threatens us from the outside; rather the stranger is inside us and our identity is always already contaminated from the beginning (a point also suggested by Prawer twenty years before *Strangers to Ourselves*).

> If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners. Therefore Freud does not talk about them. The ethics of psychoanalysis implies a politics: it would involve a cosmopolitanism of a new sort that, cutting across governements, economies and markets, might work for a mankind whose solidarity is founded on the consciousness of its unconscious—desiring, destructive, fearful, empty, impossible. (Kristeva 1991, 197)

Kristeva's ethics of the uncanny inspired readings of the stranger in terms of the uncanny in postcolonialism. The alterity of the postcolonial subject vis-à-vis the dominant Western subject is internalized by the non-Western who feels uncanny.[12] According to Homi Bhaba, the uncanny or "unhomely" is a key concept to grasp the experience of extra-territorialization, estrangement, and ambivalence of the postcolonial subject, as it is expressed in contemporary literature (Toni Morrison, V. S. Naipaul).

> Although the "unhomely" is a paradigmatic post-colonial experience, it has a resonance that can be heard, distinctly, if eratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions. (Bhaba 1994, 9–11)

Andrew McCann points out that the Freudian uncanny is "a culturally specific experience belonging to the subjective-aesthetic domain of a highly differentiated modern society." Its theorization is, therefore, "itself indebted to the epistemic procedures of colonialisms," i.e., anthropologic research of primitive people from a modernizing Western perspective that ideologically tries to suppress its own atavistic and animistic roots (McCann 2003, 328).

In his anthropological study of witchcraft, James Siegel (2006) describes the confrontation with otherness and with animistic beliefs and practices in terms of the uncanny and returns to the repressed conceptual roots of the uncanny in the third essay of the controversial *Totem and Taboo*. In the field of religion studies as well, the uncanny

and Freud's work on culture, society, and religion also make a marked comeback at the end of the twentieth century in relation to ambivalence, anti-Semitism, and misogyny.[13]

In the 1990s, "trauma theory" came into prominence in the American academy, especially at Yale. Trauma studies is a mixture of deconstruction and psychoanalysis, especially the second phase of Freud's work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where the experience of traumatic neuroses after World War I led Freud to the hypothesis of the death drive. Its forerunner "The Uncanny" is a recurrent reference in trauma theory because it offers a valid model of dealing with trauma in terms of shock, event, and repetition, rather than in terms of narrative representation.[14] After 9/11 the uncanny provides some authors (Daniel R. Heischman [2002] and Angela Connolly [2003]) with a framework in which to deal with the shock of terrorism as a fear for the stranger among us and with the enormous impact of the continually repeated images in the media of the attacks on the World Trade Center.

Kristeva's ethics and the ensuing applications of the uncanny in anthropology, religion studies, and trauma studies broaden the uncanny's potential to new fields, but they remain largely faithful to the Freudian framework. In Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, by contrast, the notion blends with Marxist alienation and Heideggerian unhomeliness. Twenty years after "The Double Session," Derrida returns to the uncanny to place it at the heart of his controversial study of what is left of the legacy of Marx after the fall of the Communist regime. This legacy is examined as a return of the repressed: a haunting that is at the same time an invocation, convocation, and exorcism. In *Specters of Marx*, contemporary political debates regarding the fall of the Berlin Wall and the *Apartheid* regime in South Africa as well as Francis Fukuyama's ensuing celebration of the end of history provoke Derrida to turn to Marx, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Plato, with the work of Heidegger and Freud guiding his deconstruction. The uncanny as a destabilizing concept is now taken one step further: not only does it undermine conceptual discourse, it also disturbs the ethical and the political order.

> We think that the frequent, decisive, and organizing recourse that the latter has to the value of *Unheimlichkeit*, in *Being and Time* and elsewhere, remains generally unnoticed or neglected. In both discourses, that of Freud and that of Heidegger, this recourse makes possible fundamental projects or trajectories. But it does so while destabilizing permanently, and in a more or less subterraneous fashion,

> the order of conceptual distinctions that are put to work. It should disturb both the ethics and the politics that follow implicitly or explicitly from that order. Our hypothesis is that the same is true for Marx. Is this not our own great problematic constellation of haunting? It has no certain border but it blinks and sparkles behind the proper names of Marx, Freud, and Heidegger. [. . .] The subtitle of this address could thus have been: "Marx—*das Unheimliche*." Marx remains an immigrant *chez nous*, a glorious, sacred, accursed but still a clandestine immigrant as he was all his life. He belongs to a time of disjunction, to that "time out of joint" in which is inaugurated, laboriously, painfully, tragically, a new thinking of borders, a new experience of the house, the home and the economy. (Derrida 1994, 174)

In a pun on "ontology," Derrida proposes a "hauntology": a philosophy of haunting, of the return of the repressed, in which the spectral takes precedent over being, existence. This new philosophy wants to examine the intermediate or suspended state of the ghost and of fiction—neither dead nor alive, neither here nor there—as exemplary for the omnipresence of the immaterial, the virtual, and the unspeakable in our society. Thus, he argues that Marx's specter haunts the present world and its institutions, even more so when Marxism is triumphantly declared dead by capitalism.

In hauntology, the uncanny is a mix of Heidegger's ontological category "Unheimlichkeit" and the Freudian uncanny. The different linguistic forms—a substantive versus a substantivized adjective—are telling. The mild affect of the Freudian "uncanny" would at best be a *Stimmung* in Heideggers's view. Vice versa, it is unlikely that Freud regarded the uncanny as the existential condition of mankind, as Heidegger puts it, or as the exemplum of anxiety, as Lacan suggested. Heidegger did not hold Freud in great esteem, and there is no evidence that Freud was familiar with Heidegger's work. However, through the intermediaries of Derrida and Lacan, the Heideggerian uncanny has been discovered in the wake of the Freudian uncanny. The attention to *Unheimlichkeit* as a specific concept in his work arises rather late.[15] In most indexes to Heidegger's work, "unheimlich" is not listed as keyword. Still, Heidegger repeatedly refers to and reflects on *Unheimlichkeit* in his writings, for instance in his lecture series *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) and *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1942), in "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1954), "The Question of Technology" (1954) or in *What is Metaphysics?* (1967).

The links between the Freudian Unheimliche and Heidegger's Unheimlichkeit are established on four main grounds. The first argument is semantic: both authors draw attention to the rich semantics of the word "unheimlich." Second, there is the chronological closeness: Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* was published in 1927, a few years after Freud's revolutionary *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Both these works introduce a fundamental change in continental philosophy. Third, some critics argue that there is some conceptual overlap, for instance, the insistence on the impersonal construction "es" and some of the examples of the uncanny/uncanniness, for instance darkness, Wolfreys draws a parallel between Freudian repression and Heideggerian forgetting (*Seinsvergessen*) (Wolfreys 2002, 18). Fourth, Lacan's reconceptualization of psychoanalysis is tributary to existentialism. In the seminar on anxiety he compares Freud's theories on anxiety with Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's notions of Angst. The same holds true for *Specters of Marx* that establishes a link between "The Uncanny" and *Being and Time*.

One could say that the genealogy of the concept of Unheimlichkeit in the work of Heidegger mirrors the conceptualization process of the (post-)Freudian uncanny on a smaller scale. In *Being and Time* Heidegger mentions the notion in relation to the existential-ontological description of *Angst*. For Heidegger, anxiety (Angst) is not a psychological sentiment but a fundamental dimension of *Dasein*.

> In anxiety, one feels "*uncanny*." Here the particular indefiniteness of that which *Dasein* finds itself alongside in anxiety, comes proximally to expression: the "nothing and nowhere." But here the "uncanniness" also means "not-being-at-home" ["*das Nicht-zuhause-sein*"]. (. . .) On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world.' Everyday familiarity with the world collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in-the-world. Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the "*not-at-home*." Nothing else is meant by our talk about 'uncanniness.' (Heidegger 2000a, 233)

The experience of not being at home in the world, of homesickness, is not a phenomenological experience, like fear (*Furcht*). It is an underlying existential or ontological condition of the human being: man does not belong in the world, even if he may experience a familiarity with it. Dasein can tune in to this ontological condition of uncanniness through attunements (*Stimmungen*) like love, boredom,

or *Heimweh* (homesickness or spleen) (Heidegger 2000a, 234). Therefore, anxiety comes out of nowhere, in a double confrontation with contingency (*Geworfenheit*) and with one's being in the world and with conscience and responsibility (*Seinkönnen*) as modes of being (Heidegger 2000a, 234).

In *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000b) and *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (1996) Heidegger analyzes the first choir chant of Sophocles' *Antigone* and focuses on the word "deinon" translated by Friedrich Hölderlin as "unheimlich": "Vielfaltig das Unheimliche, nichts doch/ über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend vor sich regt" ("the uncanny is multiple, but nothing—above people uncannily raging rises") (Heidegger 2000b, 156). Like Otto and Freud, Heidegger draws attention to the ambivalence of the Greek notion "deinon," which means first "terrible" (*furchtbar*), "overwhelming," "awe inspiring," and also "violent" or "doing violence" (*gewaltig*).[16]

> We understand the un-canny as that which throws one out of the "canny," that is the homely, the accustomed, the usual, the unendangered. The unhomely does not allow us to be at home. Therein lies the over-whelming. But human beings are the uncanniest, not only because they spend their lives essentially in the midst of the un-canny understood in this sense, but also because they step out, move out of the limits that at first and for the most part are accustomed and homely, because as those who do violence, they overstep the limits of the homely, precisely in the direction of the uncanny in the sense of overwhelming. (Heidegger 2000b, 161)

In *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* Heidegger returns to Hölderlin's translation of *Antigone* and to deinon/the uncanny and develops his most elaborate meditation on unhomeliness as the nature of human being, linking the Greek conception of mankind to the present. The uncanny is the unity of the fearful, the powerful, and the inhabitual. Like Freud, Heidegger draws attention to the complexity and to the deconstructive tension contained within the word, which he calls "counterturning."

> Each of these three meanings—which are intrinsically related to each other—at the same time refers, whether explicitly or not, to something counterturning. The fearful is something frightening, yet also that which commands admiration. The

> fearful shows itself both in horror and in awe. The powerful can be that which everywhere prevails and looms over us, yet also that which is actively violent, that force that compels all necessity into a singular, uniform compulsion. The inhabitual is the extraordinary that directly and essentially exceeds everything habitual, so that in a certain way it stands "outside" the habitual. The inhabitual, however, can also spread in the opposite direction within the habitual, as skillfulness in all and everything. We are here translating το δεινον as "das Unheimliche," "the uncanny." The purpose of this interpretation is to think these three meanings in their unity. (Heidegger 1996, 67–68)

Hölderlin's different translations of the first lines of the choral ode constitute the basis for Heidegger's reflection. He considers the last translation of deinon as unheimlich as the unifying one because it captures the condition of mankind, which is both extraordinary and unhomely, and "something that has an alienating or 'frightening' effect that gives rise to anxiety" (Heidegger 1996, 71). The English translation of the lectures makes a clear distinction between "uncanny" and "unhomely," the concept that indicates the multiple, negative, catastrophic conception of man who is not at home in the world, whose origin cannot be indicated in a positive way. This negativity is also expressed by the notion of "counterturning" that indicates how difficult it is to pinpoint the essence of man and that foreshadows deconstructionist notions like dissemination.

The discovery of the uncanny in Heidegger in the wake of Freud can be considered as a case of stickiness in the wake of deconstruction's intensive reading of Freud's and Heidegger's texts. The same holds true, although much less systematically, of other philosophers that have been reread in the light of the Freudian uncanny, like Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Descartes, and even Aristotle (e.g., Royle 2003; Gordon Bearn 1993; Vanessa Rumble 1998; David McCallam 2003; Paul Gordon 1990 and William N. West 1999). In other philosophical systems, the Freudian uncanny has been incorporated as well. In *In Quest of the Ordinary* Stanley Cavell devotes a chapter of to "the uncanniness of the ordinary." The uncanny is not so much an existential condition but a kind of "decreation" of ordinary reality, a receptivity to the "familiar invaded by another familiar," which reveals it in a new light (Cavell 1989, 47). Often these blends have been very fruitful, although some have critized the impressionistic use of these type conceptual blends and the lack of solid argumentation.[17]

The term "unhomely" or "unhomey" as translation for "unheimlich" suggested by Prawer (Prawer 1965, 22–23) and in the translations of Heidegger gradually gained wider acceptance as an alternative or supplement to the Freudian uncanny. In postcolonial theory, the term is used by Bhaba, who was inspired by Kristeva, Lacan, Derrida, and Heidegger. As a concept, the neologism "unhomely" finds its home in "deconstructive architecture." The semantic core "home" (heim) in the word "un-heimlich" provides an immediate starting point to relate the sensation of the uncanny to space. Two related strands of conceptual construction are developed in architecture theory.

First, there is a phenomenological-deconstructive line of architecture theory that resulted in a thematic issue of *Research in Phenomenology* devoted to "Deconstruction and the Architecture of the Uncanny" in 1992. In the early 1990s, Derrida's collaborations with contemporary architects Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman put his thinking on the map of more theoretically inclined architects, who tried to think through a number of typical deconstructive motifs like the haunted house, the crypt, and spatial concepts like the non-space, dissemination, and de-construction itself. One of the collaborators to this issue is David Farell Krell, who sees the "Un-homelike" or "unhomelikeness" as a blend of a generalized existential condition of "not-being-at-home in-the-world," borrowed from Heidegger, and the Freudian uncanny as a form of anxiety. These fundamental conditions of anxiety are positive forces that motivate Krell's quest for an ontological, deconstructive theory of space and architecture, called "archeticture"(Krell 1997, 104). Mark Wigley also refers to Heideggerian *Unheimlichkeit* when he applies the uncanny to architecture theory, but his main inspiration is the work of Derrida, as the subtitle of his book, *The Architecture of Deconstruction. Derrida's Haunt*, indicates. Rather than applying the uncanny to architecture, Wigley's book offers a detailed reading of metaphors of space and architecture in Derrida's work (not including *Specters of Marx*).

Around the same time, a critical sociopolitical conception of the uncanny is constructed by Vidler. The first three chapters of *The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992) meticulously outline a genealogy of the uncanny that draws on sources ranging from Schelling and romantic literature, over Russian Formalism, Benjamin, György Lukács, and Adorno, to Lacan's seminar on anxiety, Heidegger, Kristeva, Todorov, and Bhaba. The second part of the book applies the concept of the architectural uncanny to the work of contemporary architects like Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, and Daniel Libeskind and to the issues that they

address in their work. The starting point of Vidler's elaboration is the historical, spatial, existential, psychological, and political implications of the notion "Heim," understood in the double sense of bourgeois home and the city as living environment.

> As a concept, then, the uncanny has, not unnaturally, found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror, and then in the city, where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community [. . .] has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity. (Vidler 1996, 11)

Vidler's "unhomely" is used not only in the ontological sense of not being at home but also in the political sense of not having a home, of being homeless. In his genealogy, he relates this double origin to the historical circumstances of World War I, when Freud and Heidegger wrote on the uncanny, and to contemporary political problems.

> Estrangement and homelessness have emerged as the intellectual watchwords of our century, given period material and political force by the resurgence of homelessness itself, a homelessness generated sometimes by war, sometimes by the unequal distribution of wealth. (Vidler 1996, 6)

Vidler successfully infuses Lacanian, Marxist, critical, modernist, and postmodernist concepts like alienation, estrangement, transcendental homelessness, defamiliarization, or *ostranenie* into the conceptual realm of the uncanny, turning it into a conceptual tool to address the concerns of contemporary architectural discourse and societal problems (Jay 1998, Vidler 2001). Because he relies heavily on literary theory and analysis, Vidler's "unhomely" is also applied to the motif of the house in genre fiction, e.g., the gothic and horror films.

5.3.3. Hauntology

At the turn of the century, the Heidegger-Freud-Derrida connection in "hauntology" leads to a new domain for the uncanny. In various disciplines, the concept of the uncanny fits within a larger research program that focuses on haunting, the spectral, ghosts, and telepathy as material phenomena in culture and society. Royle, Wolfreys, Peter Buse and Andrew Stott in literary studies and Avery F. Gordon in

sociology try to put the ghost and haunting back on the map, inspired mainly by Derrida, Marx, Freud, and Adorno. Others, like Deborah Dixon (2007) are interested in the spectral aspects of modern technology from a more pragmatic point of view, e.g., the phenomenon of EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena). A large project devoted to a deconstruction and critical reconceptualization of animism in contemporary culture is curator Anselm Franke's show "Animism" in Antwerp, Bern, and Berlin (2009–2011) that brings together artistic, scientific, and philosophical inquiries (Franke 2010). Royle and Gordon especially propose a poststructural renewal of scientific practice and language in order to address ethical and political questions regarding the mediatization of society, trauma, and remembrance. They want to gauge the implications of the past and the repressed in the present. In *Ghostly Matters. Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* Gordon investigates the themes of haunting, of the ghost and the return of the repressed as a material reality in postmodern society and as a serious topic for sociological investigation. At the same time, she wants to develop a new vocabulary and a new epistemology—inspired by developments in literary theory and in contemporary literature—that will enable sociology to adress questions of power in contemporary society in a new way.

> *Ghostly Matters* was thus also motivated by my desire to find a method of knowledge production and a way of writing that could represent the damage and the haunting of the historical alternatives and thus richly conjure, describe, narrate, and explain the liens, the costs, the forfeits, and the losses of modern systems of abusive power in their immediacy and worldly significance. It seemed to me that radical scholars and intellectuals knew a great deal about the world capitalist system and repressive states and yet insisted on distinctions—between subject and object of knowledge, beween fact and fiction, between presence and absence, between past and present, between knowing and not knowing—whose tenuousness and manipulation seemed precisely to me in need of comprehension and articulation, being themselves modalities of the exercise of unwanted power. (Gordon 2008, xvii)

In the second edition of her book in 2008, Gordon realizes that although her methodological "invitation to sociology to find a better purpose" was largely declined, the practices examined in 1997 as instances of

ghosts of the First World—torture, security, dirty wars, state repression, enslavement—have become frightening realities again that urgently challenge politically engaged intellectuals.

Hauntology also entails the critical study of what Avital Ronell calls "techno-hermeneutics" or what Gray Kochhar-Lindgren labels "technologics." Technologics is the diffuse, multiple logics that shape and govern our contemporary society in which classical notions of time, space, and unity of the subject have disappeared. The increasingly fragmented or multiple subject is material and virtual, human and artificial, makeable and fragile, subject to the influences of both the material and the immaterial in our world. Whereas theorists like Donna Haraway or Emily Apter revel in the new possibilities of the posthuman, others see the uncanny as a privileged trope to capture our changed relation to the world, to our bodies, and to ourselves (Halberstam 1991). Hauntology is an ambivalent project. It is positively driven by a desire to coin new hybrid conceptions of subject and object, of space and times in terms of multiplicity, simultaneity and the virtual. However, the project is marked by a fundamental distrust of technology, of contemporary bio-power and globalized capitalist networks, and by nostalgia. This nostalgic resistance is signaled by an obsessive return to past masters of discourse—Plato, Hegel, Freud, Heidegger, Derrida, and Lacan—in order to tackle the problems of the present and the future.

The infusion of the Marxist tradition of alienation in the concept of the uncanny provides it with a more critical potential. The political, psychological, and ontological notions of estrangement/alienation have been supplemented by aesthetic notions of alienation elaborated by, among others, Bertolt Brecht, Benjamin (profane illumination), Adorno, Viktor Shklovski (*ostranenie*), and Lukács (transcendental homelessness). All these notions focus on the relationship between art and society in the twentieth century, and they entail the possibility of producing political or ethical changes or at least awareness through literary and artistic effects. However, this endeavour also has its critics. From its first conception in *Specters of Marx*, the project of "hauntology" or spectrology raises the issue of the responsibility of the intellectual to question the established order from within (Fletcher 1996, 31–37). Derrida's book upset many orthodox Marxists and led to a lot of debate, mainly because it was felt that deconstruction's rhetorics of dissemination, unstability, and ambiguity were not appropriate to address real suffering and injustice in the domain of politics. Moreover, critics object to Derrida's messianism, which defers real

answers. Jay signals some of the problems to the fashionable status of the ethical-political conceptualization of the uncanny, "one of the most supercharged words in our current critical vocabulary" (Jay 1998, 157). In his view, the metaphoric openness of the word, the lack of a fixed core, which he associates with deconstruction, may lead to relativism and even cynicism with regard to "real" phenomena such as homelessness, exile, and ultimately to its recuperation by the very capitalist society that the post-Freudian uncanny supposedly criticizes: "It is now the height of canniness to market the uncanny" (Jay 1998, 163).

5.4. The Uncanny and Contemporary Culture

At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, the Freudian uncanny can thus be summarized as a blend of psychological and aesthetic estrangement, political and social alienation resulting from a deeply rooted, disturbing unhomeliness that characterizes human existence in the world, but tempered by mild, surrealist undertones and the guise of familiarity. Despite its association with haunting, spectrality and the problem of representation, the rise of the concept must be considered against the very real and concrete background of the *fin-de-millenium*. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism may have incited an urge to replace the concept of alienation, felt to be "tainted" by Marxist and post-Marxist thought, with a new concept. At the same time, the rise of new media, digital technologies, and the increased virtuality of communication also calls for notions that can capture their immaterial yet very strong presence in society, like spectrality, haunting, and animism. Contemporary societal dilemmas of xenophobia, immigration, exile, homelessness, and trauma entail forms of anxiety that are related to the opposition of the familiar and the strange, to the blurring of boundaries that is perceived as threatening and undermining. Last but not least, no matter how much it is rooted in theory, a concept cannot be disconnected from practice, from artistic and cultural phenomena. As an aesthetic concept, then, the uncanny captures the mood that is expressed in late twentieth-century cultural manifestations. In literature one can think of authors like Haruki Murakami, W. G. Sebald, and Paul Auster. In the visual arts, the uncanny has been linked to artists like Cindy Sherman, Sophie Calle, or Lucian Freud, to the cinema of David Lynch and

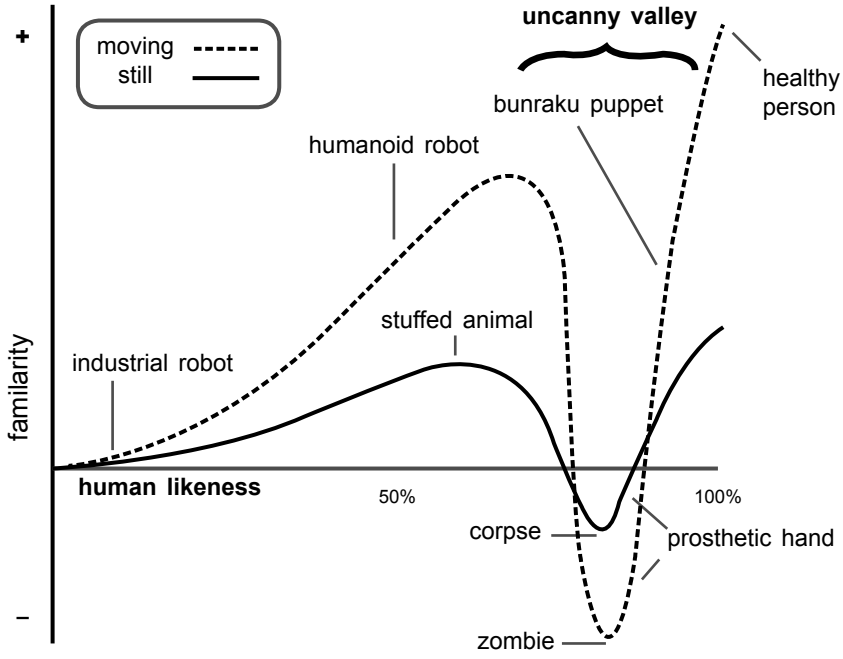
David Cronenberg, and to horror film in general. Libeskind, Tschumi, and Eisenman are "unhomely" architects.

The Freudian uncanny is the concept of an affect. At the end of the millenniumm, we see how it slides back onto the plane of composition, in other words how the theoretical notion functions as a poetical concept in the double sense of analytic tool and inspiration for artistic creation. "The trend is really there. That an exposition can credibly gather the newest positions in painting settles the case: the subject long thought deceased for art is back" (Schirrmeister 2004, 22, my trans.). The concept of the uncanny is reintroduced in contemporary art and popular culture via the detour of theory. A popular topic in artistic discourse in art schools and topical with trends in popular culture like New Wave, gothic and cyberpunk, the uncanny inspires and brings together new creative and artistic production often in forms that merge together theoretical discourse with popular idioms, creative writing, mixed media forms, installations, net-art, creative blogs, and animation. The exhibition "UnHEIMlich" in Delmenhorst to which Benno Schirrmeister refers is not the first exhibition devoted to the uncanny. In 1995 Georg Christoph Tholen and Martin Sturm curated "Augen-Blicken" (Eye-Glances) in the Offenes Kulturhaus in Linz. The exposition was conceived as a dialogue between artists and psychoanalysts on the basis of Freud's essay and explored the disappearing boundaries between reality and fiction and the relation between the uncanny and the gaze.

A recurring element of the uncanny in the visual arts is the importance of the (human) figure. Be it in the form of dolls, waxworks, giants, robots, body parts, or the plastified corpses of *Körperwelte*, the human and the posthuman are at the center of the uncanny in the visual arts. In Bruce Grenville's "The Uncanny: Experiments in Cyborg Culture" in the Vancouver Art Gallery, the motif of the automaton (the "living" doll Olympia from Hoffmann's story "The Sandman") examined by both Jentsch and Freud, is related to technology. Starting with nineteenth century automata, early photography, and cubist art, the figure of the cyborg is finally traced to contemporary Japanese art. Kelley's show "The Uncanny" in the Tate Liverpool (2004) also works with dolls, wax figures, body parts, skulls, and monsters from horror comics, mixing surrealist art (Hans Bellmer), anthropological findings, and contemporary art.[18] In the catalogue Kelley includes a long reflection on the taboo of the colored human sculpture in Western art. John C. Welchman meticulously sketches the history of the uncanny as a late-twentieth-century concept in the visual arts.

In contemporary literature, the traditional motifs of the double and the automaton or robot that have been traced back to the eighteenth century and even before continue to be topical. They are joined by newer figures like the cyborg or the technologically enhanced human being—aesthetic surgery, organ implants, transsexuals are all related to the uncanny—subsumed under the term "posthuman." In fiction the uncanny is also frequently related to the distortion, fragmentation, and layering of space and time. The work of Sebald, for example, is a unique blend of fiction, history, and photography. The protagonists are haunted by melancholia, wandering amidst the architectural traces of the past, searching for fragments of a lost identity. They struggle with trauma and literal and metaphorical homelessness after the Holocaust. Sebald's poetics of the uncanny is programmatically indicated in his work by frequent occurrences of the word "uncanny," most notably in the title of his collection of essays on Austrian literature, *Unheimliche Heimat* (1997). Opposite in tone and in his ironic flaunting of poststructuralist theories of space and media is Mark Z. Danielewski's Derridean, mock-theoretical cult classic *House of Leaves* (2000). The novel is narrated by various unreliable narrators and presented as a fragmented collection of real and fake theoretical and critical sources, articles, notes, film scripts, etc., with footnotes and an index which lists both the keywords "uncanny" and "unheimlich."[19] If the word uncanny seems to be but one among the many references in the novel, the motif of the unhomely home is throughout emphasized by the consistent highlighting of the word "house" in the text as a kind of hypertext.

At first sight, the concept's rhizomatic structure more or less seems to have stabilized at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Still, many interesting applications continue to appear. In recent years, a rather unexptected development occured: a new, heterogeneous meaning is grafted onto the uncanny coming from outside the humanities, from the field of technology. In robotics, cognitive science, and neuroscience the uncanny is not introduced via Freud's essay but through the English transation of a Japanese text from 1970, Masahiro Mori's "The Uncanny Valley" ("Bukimi No Tani"). Mori, a robot scientist, conjectures that inanimate creatures like robots become more familiar and hence more likeable when their features are human-like, but only up to a certain point. When they become too familiar and too human-like, the likeness suddenly shifts: the robot will now inspire fear and discomfort. This is even more so when movement is added. The phenomenon is represented by the "uncanny valley," a dip in the graph that represents the correspondence between familiarity and likeablity.



In his diagram, Mori puts the corpse, the zombie, and prosthetic hand below the comfort zone because in his view the uncanny valley is caused by fear of death.

> In Figure 1, a healthy person is at the top of the second peak. And when we die, we fall into the trough of the uncanny valley. Our body becomes cold, our color changes, and movement ceases. Therefore, our impression of death can be explained by the movement from the second peak to the uncanny valley as shown by the dashed line in the figure. We might be happy this line is into the still valley of a corpse and that of not the living dead! I think this explains the mystery of the uncanny valley: Why do we humans have such a feeling of strangeness? Is this necessary? I have not yet considered it deeply, but it may be important to our self-preservation. (Mori (1970) 1995, 35)

Mori's short paper bears some resemblance to Freud's essay, without referring to it.[20] The uncanny valley can be applied to the famous doll

Olympia in "The Sandman"—whose mechanic perfection was uncanny to all but Nathaniel. However, the goal of Mori's paper is rather different: Mori is first and foremost interested in how the uncanny valley can be avoided, not so much in why it occurs.

The uncanny valley hypothesis from 1970 was not actually tested, but it has been very influential in the field of robotics and (computer) animation, where it has come to provide a kind of standard of what was to be avoided in the development of new technology and design that is costly and must therefore be "liked" by the public. Robots and animated figures should be human-like but not too much because then they risk rejection. Recent cognitive and neuropsychological research has examined different aspects of the uncanny valley, to find out which aspects of the robot would be responsible for the phenomenon: the robot's appearance, facial expressions and eye movements, movement, personality, cultural and gender aspects.[21] In 2009, The Princeton Neuroscience Institute discovered that the uncanny valley also exists for primates—something that was already posited by Clement of Alexandria, a neo-platonist Christian theologian (Kelley 2004, 18 and 34)—and Catrin Misselhorn (2009) offers a philosophical explanation of the phenomenon. Roboticists like Karl MacDorman and David Hanson are determined to overcome to uncanny valley in order to produce realistic, lifelike, intelligent humanoids that can be a part of our society in a few decades.

> It will take decades at least to raise robots that are as smart and independent as we are, but the work has begun. Robots that learn on their own, robots that walk, robots that socialize with people, are all now in various stages of development. "A realistic autonomous humanoid is the Holy Grail," Sporn says. (. . .) Humans are facing an identiy crisis, Hanson said—one that just a few people know about but many sense. "If we can mechanize what makes us human, that will make us feel like a mechanism," he said. Maybe that's what really lies behind the resistance to realistic humanoids, the reluctance to venture into the uncanny valley. And when do we cross over? At the February AAAS conference, someone asked Hanson his ultimate goal. A compassionate robot, he said: a peer, a friend. The goal, he said, is "letting it loose." (Ferber 2003)

Many uncanny-valley researchers—whether they want to overcome the uncanny valley or not—are only dimly aware of the uncanny in

other traditions. At best, the texts of Freud and Jentsch are considered corroborations of Mori's hypothesis that the uncanny is caused by fear of death.

In the entertainment industry, the uncanny valley and the uncanny seem to find more common ground because of the mixture of technology and narrative. According to Tom Geller, animation and cinemation (i.e., the interaction between live-action characters and animation) can play an important role in the development toward a "post- or transhuman" society, not only as test material but also to educate the public. Animation techniques in games and cinema can help prepare for this evolution, both by stunning the public with rapidly evolving spectacular innovations as well as thematically, by creating narratives that can be regarded as allegories and embodiments of the creation of A-life or artificial life (Monnet 2004). These narratives are found in classic Hollywood science-fiction films like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and Steven Spielberg's *A.I.*, where real actors play the role of robots. In these movies and in children's animations like *Wall-E* or *Toy Story*, animated robots and toys—familiar from horror and science fiction movies, where they are usually uncanny creatures—are successfully turned into likeable and believable characters that are even more genuinely human than the automatized humans.[22] However, photo-realistic animation with fully computer-animated human characters in movies like *Polar Express* and *Final Fantasy* have so far fallen into the uncanny valley (Stix 2008, Loder 2004). Thus far, creatures that remain at a safe distance from the human and that also incorporate the uncanniness of the new technology within already familiar uncanny motifs, like Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*, have worked best in mainstream cinema. James Cameron's *Avatar* (2010) is the most ambitious and successful project that uses 3D to create hundreds of photo-realistic computer-graphic characters. However, through their color and design, his Na'vi people still maintain a distance from the human and do not risk falling into the uncanny valley.

The evolution of the acceptance of photo-realistic animation could be read as parallel to the evolution of sound in cinema. In *Uncanny Bodies*, Robert Spadoni demonstrates how in the early stages of sound film the combination of sound and moving image was experienced as very uncanny for various technical reasons. Instead of creating the realistic, lively effect of the "magic" of cinema, sound film initially heightened the "dead" and unnatural qualities of the cinematic image. The problem was resolved, according to Spadoni, by two early horror films, Tod Browning's *Dracula* and James Whale's *Frankenstein*. In those films, the uncanniness of undead figures like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*

was so amplified by the use of sound and silence that cinema suddenly regained its magic powers of bringing the supernatural to life. This is also the case with ambiguous animated creatures like Gollum or King Kong. They prepare the audience for new techniques as well as for the creation and animation in the double sense of the word of a new race like the Na'vi. This is what some robotists hope can be the case with animation and robots. By heightening their uncanny qualities in fiction, we get used to them and may be prepared for their actual arrival in our posthuman world as the technology is perfected.

The scientific literature dealing with human-robot interaction or with state of the art photo-realistic animation usually focuses on the realm of the service and the entertainment industries (movies and games). It remains far removed from other, more lucrative applications for robots and photo-realistic animation: the sex industry and the military, which already creates lifelike sex-dolls and uses hyper-realistic videogames as military training programs (Salmon 2007). Charlie Gere's genealogy of the advacement of technology, abstraction, and virtualization in the twentieth century in *Art, Time and Technology* (2006) reveals how innovation and mediatization is driven by military inventions and by art in untimely fashion. This double drive, threatening and ludic at the same time, belatedly prepares us for technological innovations in our daily lives but also warns us never to be too much at home or at ease with technology.

6

Concluding Remarks

In order to deal with the rapidly expanding corpus of definitions and applications of the concept, this genealogy has rigorously followed the sticky path of the signifiers "uncanny—unheimlich—inquiétante étrangeté" in various indexes and search engines. This led to the most divergent themes, objects, topics, domains, associations, affiliations, deviations, and disseminations. The material constraint also entailed openness to other, non-canonical and forgotten sources on the uncanny. The material that has been unearthed for this study resulted in a specific picture of the conceptualization process. While the (un)concept of the uncanny is mostly situated in (post)structuralist circles, there are other, less well-known conceptualizations, leading back to Otto, Schelling, Heidegger, and others.

Within Freud's oeuvre, the ambivalent and hesitating structure of the essay is mirrored by the position of the concept in his work. In post-Freudian psychoanalysis, the influence of the Lacanian tradition on the conceptualization of the uncanny cannot be overestimated even if it is in a sense only at the beginning, since Lacan's most explicit commentary on the uncanny did not appear before the twenty-first century and is not part of the Lacanian canon. In the British tradition of psychoanalysis, the uncanny managed to survive in a more clinical environment. In recent years, it has resurfaced again in a more creative form in the work of, for instance, Christopher Bollas. In the field of deconstruction, Derrida's early work on the uncanny in "The Double Session" is perpetuated by several thinkers close to him. Some of them, like Cixous or Weber have become landmark studies of the uncanny in their own right. Others who operated on the same scene, like Kofman or Rey have been equally "haunted" by the uncanny in their work but are much less well known.

The notion of "stickiness," a vague yet material metaphor, indicates the more subterraneous factors in conceptualization, both on an

individual and on an intersubjective level. When examining the status of the word "unheimlich" in Freud's work, various indexes are remarkably inconsistent, casting doubt on the conceptual value and position of the uncanny in Freud's work. A conceptual gesture, as performed by Freud, does not merely consist of drawing attention to a word and defining a concept; it also affects a larger discourse. This is why words that have hitherto been virtually ignored can become significant and important much later. This kind of attention to the signifier and to minor, seemingly insignificant details is intricately bound up with the method of psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic practice, but the marginal position of the essay also facilitated its isolation and detachment from the confines of that framework. This allowed "The Uncanny" to gradually become a model for another type of knowledge operating in the margin of a more general "Theory" governed by ambivalence, uncertainty, repetition, haunting, and fiction.

The repeated insistence on the marginality of the essay in the rereadings of the essay, even when it was already quite well known and established, also reveals the underlying desires of a critic: to discover and to cast a new, original light, a quest for the postromantic, negative, or secular Sublime through a metaphorical, rhetorical, and performative style, or an attempt to contribute to and institutionalize the canon of (post)structuralist Theory. Theory, according to Rabaté, is a cyclical phenomenon that "tends to describe loops and circles" (Rabaté 2002, 2). Looking at the history of the uncanny from a discursive perspective reveals how much the conceptualization process consists of repetitions and loops on the edge of conceptuality until a tipping point is reached, tilting over into canonization.

Indeed, the singular acts of rereading "The Uncanny," whether strong or weak, constitute repeated gestures of conceptualization through which a body of texts from various domains is appropriated. In this way, a canon of Theory and theoretical concepts was formed by repetition rather than by definition, that works through various subdomains and trends of research and teaching in the humanities, and that serves as common currency between them. As a concept that self-reflexively also signifies its opposite, as an affect and an effect, as a theoretical fiction, and as a flimsy label, the uncanny's operation is often determined by a specific form of stickiness that has become a "style."

One of the preconditions for the uncanny to become a concept was its association with a more or less stable corpus of texts and genres that has remained a material basis for the praxis of the uncanny. In 1970, Todorov's *The Fantastic* shifted the emphasis from comparative, phenomenological genre study to a theoretical, methodologically

consistent approach to literary genre (and literature in general), i.e., structural poetics.

Still, the object of his study—literature and literary language, and the historical genre of the fantastic—forces him to a high degree of self-reflection, which pervades, affects, and animates his use of language, categories, and concepts. Todorov's metatheoretical perspective programmatically inscribes hesitation, ambivalence, and imperfection at the heart of his theory of the fantastic as the literary genre that embodied the peculiar, precarious existence of literature to such perfection that it was forced to self-destruct, turning his rigorous abstract research program into an ironic, highly sensitive form of play.

The themes of doubt, evanescence, transgression, and seduction found in Todorov, whose conception of literature is profoundly inspired by Blanchot, bring him close to Derrida's and Cixous's contemporaneous readings of Freud's essay. Here, notions already singled out by Lacan in the early 1960s, like "lexical ambivalence," "castration," and "doubling" are elaborated in terms of "dissemination" and the "endless deferral of meaning" that constitute the fleeting and untamable "essence" of literature and that necessitate a new "double science" or a "double reading" between theory and literature.

Cixous goes further than Todorov and Derrida in turning the tables on Freud's seduction by literature. By following through the motifs of intellectual uncertainty and theatricality, Freud appears as an actor who not so much embodies a scientific ideal but who imitates or plays it, multiplying and taking on so many roles that he loses track of what he is doing. In Cixous's rhetorical text, the notions of play and seduction, already present in Vax's phenomenology of the fantastic, acquire negative connotations contributing to an impression of naïve, slightly ridiculous (masculine) intellectual overestimation and a powerlessness against temptation.

More and more, in the rereadings of "The Uncanny," Freud is cast as a conceptual persona: the psychoanalyst whose conscious scientific ambitious are undermined by his unconscious attractions; the founder of discourse who jealously guards his claims to priority; a reader whose knowledge comes at the cost of great blind spots. Moreover, the conceptual compounds of anxiety and alienation, both in the clinical and in the existential sense, and the concept's roots in primitivism (which later take on the form of anti-rationalism or anti-Enlightenment thinking) cannot be underestimated in pushing the uncanny forward as a concept to express and analyze a very broad spectrum of end-of-the-millennium cultural, social, political, and technological phenomena.

The sense of imperfection and human frailty that has infused the concept of the uncanny at the outset of its conceptualization, properly speaking, paradoxically made this concept/affect/effect particularly well suited to the posthuman, emptied subject of Theory. In the conceptual history that has been mapped here, the theorist is turned into a character, a persona, swept along by a larger movement that it is to a great extent beyond his or her control. At the same time, the conceptual tissue is animated and distorted—like Nicolas Provost's "transmogrification" of the pixilated images from classic horror films on the cover of this book—prolonging its precarious existence in the stream of discourse: "The Unheimliche has no end, but it is necessary for the text to stop somewhere" (Cixous 1976, 545).

Notes

Chapter 1

1. As Freud puts it, the "uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through a process of repression" (Freud 1919h, 241). Freud's essay will be indicated as "The Uncanny" rather than Strachey's translation "The 'Uncanny,'" When referring to the concept, "the uncanny" capitals will be omitted. All references to and quotes from Freud's texts will be to the Standard Edition, unless otherwise indicated.

2. In his 1995 *Salmagundi* column "The Uncanny Nineties," Jay critically examines the rise and popularity of "the uncanny" in theoretical and critical discourse at the end of the twentieth century, pointing out how the very idea of definition is problematized by the uncanny. Jay refers to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993), where the uncanny is examined in the work of Freud, Marx, and Heidegger. In this book, Derrida also coins the neologism "hauntology," a pun on ontology. "Hauntology" examines the traces of the repressed that haunt the stable meanings and certainties of Western metaphysics and contemporary science: "[. . .] Derrida argues that 'it is necessary to introduce hauntology into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. [. . .] Thus, the uncanny becomes not a source of terror and discomfort—or at least not that alone—but also a bulwark against the dangerous temptations of conjuring away plural specters in the name of a redeemed whole, a realization of narcissistic fantasies, a restoration of a true *Heimat*" (Jay 1998, 161). The positive critical function of the uncanny is that the concept exposes the ideological closure of definitions and concepts that haunts the pretense to conceptual discourse. Yet, Jay also formulates critical remarks and cautions "against the complete conflation of real and metaphorical phenomena, especially that of homelessness, which can too easily legitimate the callous indifference that seems to have numbed many of us in the 'uncanny nineties' to literal misery'" (Jay 1998, 12–13).

3. This is both the result of a programmatic decision and of the way in which the book is compiled as a series of Royle's articles and papers on the uncanny over a very long period, which is more and more characteristic of the present academic publication climate.

4. This is due to the eccentric or offbeat (*abseits*) position of its topic (for instance Rey 1979, 19; Weber 1973; Weber 2000), as well as to the indeterminacy and the eclectic structure of the essay itself.

5. This questioning of the concept of the uncanny continues for a long time. As pointed out above, Jay wonders whether "uncanny" is a buzzword or whether it can be a genuine critical concept. Bal also cites the uncanny as an example of a "mere label": "[c]oncepts (mis)used as labels lose their working force. They are subject to fashion and quickly become meaningless. A few years ago, the 'uncanny' was such a label" (Bal 2000, 5). In 2002, she calls this phenomenon "diffusion": "'Diffusion' is the result of an unwarranted and casual 'application' of concepts. Application, in this case, entails using concepts as labels that neither explain nor specify, but only name. Such labelling goes on when a concept emerges as fashionable, without the search for new meaning that ought to accompany its deployment taking place. I recall vividly the sudden frequency of the word 'uncanny,' for example, and, also, quite upsettingly, a certain abuse of the word 'trauma,'" (Bal 2002, 33).

6. The notion of "Theory" refers to a more or less coherent body of concepts and texts on society, culture, and modernity that circulates in various disciplines of the humanities. In the Anglo-Saxon world, "Theory" is often opposed to criticism on the one hand and to analytic and pragmatic philosophy on the other hand. In the second sense, it coincides with twentieth-century continental philosophy. "Theory" has become a kind of "common currency" in the humanities, and yet, the notion is by no means univocal. Paradoxically, the (post)structuralist questioning of the hierarchical, ideological, scientific status of theoretical discourses (psychoanalysis, philosophy) has coincided with an explosion of theory, which serves as the legitimization of a practice and as an index of autonomy and professionalization. See Cusset 2008, Dosse 1998, Hunter 2006, Rabaté 2002, Sheringham 2006, to name but a few writers who dealt with this phenomenon.

7. Following Rey, Normand takes the uncanny as an example: "In order to manifest what can only be said by concepts (for instance the *Unheimliche*—generally translated by the uncanny [*l'inquiétante étrangeté*]—'whose significations keep on proliferating by the repeated perfusion of the negative and the positive . . . which can never be resolved or completely covered by a concept, or even simply be named'" ([Rey,] p. 137)), Freud refines and differentiates his metaphorical register by putting to work what he calls 'theoretical fictions' (*Theoretische Fiktionen*)" (Normand 1974, 155, my trans.).

8. "Fiction extends into the theory both of negation (*Verneinung*) and of the uncanny (*l'Unheimliche*) simultaneously as the confirmation of fundamental basic axioma's of the psychoanalytic practice and as guidelines for the technique, a theoretical-practical conglomerate which could only let itself be subsumed by concepts elaborated in the most rigorous way" (Normand 1974, 156).

9. Deleuze and Guattari focus on the creative aspect of making concepts. However, not every new concept is successful: "Criticism implies new

concepts (of the thing criticized), just as much as the positive creation. Concepts must have irregular contours molded on living material. What is naturally uninteresting? Flimsy concepts, what Nietzsche called the 'formless and fluid daubs of concepts'—or, on the contrary, concepts that are too regular, and reduced to a framework" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 83).

10. Conceptual personae are the "voices" used in philosophy, as distinct from philosophical authors as narrators are from literary authors. Examples are the figure of Socrates in the work of Plato or Zarathustra in Nietzsche, but the conceptual persona may also be more abstract types, e.g. the fool or the friend (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 69).

11. For Deleuze and Guattari, the activity of thinking is in all three cases executed by the "thinking brain"rather than by persons.

12. The notion of repression does not make sense in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, which is based on desire and production as a positive force. However, they do occasionally refer to the uncanny: "But if nature is like art, this is always because it combines two living elements in every way: House and Universe, *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and large refrain" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996, 186). See Masschelein 2008.

13. To begin with, a word has to be recognized as a keyword before it will be included in an index. Second, before a certain date, a lot of material is not included in databases. Third, indexes are to a large extent English-biased. French books, for instance, rarely include indexes. For smaller languages, like Dutch, there are few (electronic) keyword indexes available.

14. See also Cusset 2008, Hunter 2006, and Welchman 2004.

15. In the late 1990s, the term "stickiness" was "Internet speak" for the ability of a Website's content and design to keep the user in the site for as long as possible.

16. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari point out that the mapping of a concept is to a large extent indistinguishable from the construction of a concept: "What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. [. . .] It is itself a part of the rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 13). In other words, a map of conceptualization is alwas a *creation*, never just the objective rendering of a fixed state.

Chapter 2

1. The new French translation of Freud provoked a lot of controversy, to which the team of translators replied with *Traduire Freud,* in which they clarify and defend their vocabulary term by term. For "unheimlich," they propose "inquiétant" rather than Marie Bonaparte's "inquiétante étrangeté."

2. Although the popular *Studienausgabe* of Freud's work is not a complete edition—for instance *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life* is not included—the "Namen- und Sachregister" serves as a reference point because the authorative German complete edition of Freud's work, the *Gesamtausgabe*, has neither index nor editorial introductions or footnotes. For methodological reasons, we have not used the electronic edition of Freud but the paper indexes because we assume that words in indexes are considered to have some conceptual value.

3. Nobus's bibliography is not limited to Freud. It also lists occurrences of the word in the work of Lacan, as well as the most important articles on "The Uncanny" in psychoanalytic and literary theory until the early 1990s, which is quite an achievement in pre-electronic ages.

4. For an etymological investigation of "unheimlich" in German, see Masschelein 2005. It must be remarked that "unheimlich" is not used by Freud as adverb, in the sense of "very, extraordinary."

5. No information is provided on the editorial choices or the method used in compiling the bibliography.

6. Nobus's enterprise betrays a similar attachment to the signifier, which he shares with countless other authors, who do not tire of reflecting and punning on the word "unheimlich." For some, the occurrence of the word in Freud's work has become a veritable *Leitmotif* throughout their own oeuvre, e.g., Kofman, Rey, Weber and, of course, Royle.

7. The publication date of *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life* is 1901, but the passages containing the substantivized adjective date from a later period. The footnote reference to Hitschmann on page 261 indicates that this part must have been added later than 1904, around 1915/16, but probably earlier than 1919. By that time, Freud had already made further inquiries into the theme of superstition, the omnipotence of thought and chance in the case study of the Rat Man and in *Totem and Taboo*.

8. Earlier on, in Chapter 5, the term "unheimlich" already occurs in the speech of the young banker X, which could be considered as a case of the omnipotence of thought: "I will add a further instance, in which the slip of the tongue assumed the positively uncanny characteristic of a prophecy" (Freud 1901b, 96).

9. In a later study on the topic, "Fausse Reconnaissance (déjà raconté) in Psycho-Analytic Treatment," Freud confirms his earlier views and highlights the importance of the phenomenon during the psychoanalytic treatment. The example given to illustrate the mechanism is a repressed memory dealing with the castration complex (Freud 1914a, 204–205).

10. Royle has studied the remarkable exclusion of *déjà vu* from "The Uncanny": "Excluded, *déjà vu* is more uncannily active in Freud's essay than if it were included. And it is because it is excluded that it is included. *Déjà vu* is present *and* absent in Freud's essay; and it is *neither* present *nor* absent" (Royle 1999, 12).

11. Analyses of the Wolf Man in terms of the uncanny can be found in Lacan 2004, Wright 1999, Hofman, 1995 and in Creed 2005.

12. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud discusses this phenomenon in a slightly different context, explaining that he borrows the term from a "highly intelligent" patient, the Rat Man (Freud 1912–13, 86).

13. In *Inhibitions, Symptions and Anxiety* (1926d), Freud proposes to reserve the term "repression" for the process where a representation is completely withdrawn from consciousness, which is typical for hysteria. The term "defense" is suggested to indicate other ways of dealing with unwanted impulses (Freud 1909d, 196 n1 and 1926d, 162–168).

14. Many of these themes also appear in "The Uncanny," especially the uncertainty about death. As Cixous points out, following the footnotes of the *Studienausgabe*, Freud's uncertainty about the length of his life crept in the semi-autobiographical story of the continuous reappearance of the number 62.

15. From a clinical perspective, the sensation of the uncanny is, according to Quakelbeen and Nobus, first and foremost related to castration anxiety, "the unsurmountable rock of theory formation on the neurotic structural moment" (Quakelbeen and Nobus 1993, 80, my trans.).

16. Kittler convincingly demonstrates that the latter scene could also be interpreted in terms of the (Lacanian) fragmented body (*corps morcelé*) or the fear of literally falling apart, which is more typical of psychosis than of neurosis.

17. A good discussion of Freud's essay is found in Ronell 2002, Chapter 4.

18. The final version of the essay still contains one almost literal rephrasing of a passage from *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1919h, 240–241) and two footnote references to the text by Freud (Freud 1919h, 241 and 243).

19. The editors remind the reader that "Abel's pamphlet was published in 1884 and it would not be surprising if some of his findings were not supported by later philologists" (Freud 1910e, 154). References to this essay in relation to the uncanny can be found in Derrida 1970, Rey 1974, Mérigot 1974, Ledoux 1979, Couvreur 1987.

20. The notion of the evil eye appears twice in "The Uncanny," explicitly on p. 240, and later in "that uncanny figure of Romantic superstition," the *Gettatore*, i.e., the thrower of the evil eye (Freud 1919h, 243).

21. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud also illustrates omnipotence of thought with the Rat Man's experience in the spa, but he extends the phenomenon to all neuroses, since symptoms in general are more determined by the reality of thought than by outside reality (Freud 1912–13, 86–87). The neurotic's obsessions are like the primitive taboos mostly related to death, and the protective measures that he takes are based on the principle of magic formulas.

22. According to Freud, the primitive thought processes are sexualized. This means that they are invested with libidinal energy until they reach the status of "omnipotence." The satisfaction is direct, even though it is phantasmatic because in the narcissistic phase, the ego does not distinguish between inside and outside, between reality and phantasm (Freud 1912–13, 88).

23. Later on, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud will develop a similar reasoning for the development of the ego which is secured by sublimated energy.

24. Following Derrida, a lot of attention has been paid to Freud's writings on telepathy. An overview of this is found in Luckhurst (Buse and Stott 1999, 50–71). The reconceptualization of telepathy in narrative communication as a transference between writer, character, and reader, rather than the theological notion of omniscience, as has been worked out by Royle 2003 and Schwenger 1999, is a logical next step. Christopher Bollas relates the uncanny and telepathy to the unconscious communication between patient and analyst in *Cracking Up* (1995).

25. On several occasions, Freud puts forward that the narcissistic overestimation of thought, which is a continuation of childhood play, is the basis of fantasy and of artistic creation (Freud 1908e, 143–144, 1911, 221–223). See also Enriquez 1983, 45–46. An interesting reading of this passage can be found in Lehmann 1989.

26. The German editors remark that "One could, rightly so, consider the present work with Freud's writings about visual art and literature—the author himself included it in his small collection *Literature and Art*—and one should obviously read it in connection with the other writings about literature, to which it provides an important contribution (especially with regard to E. T. A. Hoffmann). At the same time though, this work treats the uncanny as a psychical phenomenon of real life, and Freud's investigations of the definitions of the word and of the origins and conditions of appearance of the phenomenon in itself lead to domains beyond literature" (Freud 1919h, 242, my trans.).

27. On the relationship between the mother, death, and female genitalia in this essay and "The Uncanny," see André 1995, 61–62.

28. In "La Judith de Hebbel" in *Quatre Romans Analytiques* Kofman emphasizes the use of the word "unheimlich" in this text.

29. The desire for revenge is motivated by the little girl's attachment to the father: since the husband is a substitute for the father, he might not live up to this ideal and disappoint the girl. Furthermore, the first coitus reactivates penis-envy (Freud 1918a, 204).

30. This very short piece, hardly more than a page long, has been rediscovered due to the renewed interest to the iconography of Medusa in art and popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s, and in the wake of "The Uncanny." On the cover of Rey's *Parcours de Freud* (1974), in which "The Uncanny" is one of the seminal texts, is a picture of Rubens's *Medusa Head*. Translations of "The Medusa Head" are included in the thematic issue on "L'inquiétante étrangeté" of the *Revue française de psychoanalyse* and in Lloyd Smith's *Uncanny American Fiction. Medusa's Face*. An editorial footnote added to "The Medusa Head" in the collection of Freud's *Writings on Art and Literature* (Freud 1997, 264) refers to "The Uncanny." See also Hertz 1997, xiv–xv, n1.

31. Many authors have drawn attention to the historical and biographical circumstances in which "The Uncanny" was written, to which Freud briefly alludes in the essay. On the one hand, he was unable to finish his research due to the war. On the other hand, having survived his own death—he

superstitiously believed he would die at 62—and having suffered general and personal losses in the First World War, Freud's preoccupation with death also leaves its traces in "The Uncanny."

32. Freud's analysis uncannily prefigures the Second World War, which was to a far greater extent than the First World War determined by the cult of leaders.

33. The ritual of Communion is based on the ancient practice of the totem meal, and many elements in Christian faith entail a return to magical practices (e.g., rituals and miracles) and ancient Mother-religions (the Virgin Mary), which were surmounted in the highly spiritualized, elevated, and abstract Jewish religion. This why Freud argues that although Judaism is a Father-religion and Christianity a Son-religion, the elder of the two nevertheless presents the highest degree of spiritualization (Freud 1939a, 88).

34. It is strange that Freud at no point in his text mentions Reik's *The Strange God and One's Own God* in which the uncanniness of circumcision is also examined. More recently, several authors have elaborated this idea of the uncanniness of the Jewish people: Maciejewski 1999, Shapiro 1997, Stein 1984.

35. Freud emphasizes that the unconscious thing representation is not an image in the conscious sense of the word: "What we have permissively called the conscious presentation of the object can now be split up into the presentation of the *word* and the presentation of the *thing*; the latter consists in the cathexis, if not of the direct memory-images of the thing, at least of remote memory-traces derived from these" (Freud 1915e, 201). The image of the memory trace and the mechanism of remembering is poignantly expressed in "The Mystic Writing-Pad" (1925).

36. The editors point out that Freud habitually uses the term in the first meaning. In the analysis of the Rat Man, it is clear that ambivalence in all three senses of the word is the main characteristic of obsessive-compulsive neurosis.

37. In other words, we are dealing with a case of reversal of activity into passivity and of the drive turning against the proper person.

38. In "The Uncanny" we get a version of this Oedipal constellation in Freud's interpretation of Olympia in "The Sandman": "This automatic doll can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards the father in his infancy" (Freud 1919h, 232).

39. Since it is repressed, the superego is fed and fuelled by drive energies from the id in its attacks on the ego. Moreover, in the id the superego has more sources of energy than just the repressed. Part of the id, is constituted by unconscious phylogenetic contents because experiences such as the father complex and castration anxiety are universal and are passed on as an archaic individual inheritance of this origin. Thus, we learn that, on a phylogenetic level, the superego and the sense of guilt it installs lie at the heart of religion and of fate (*Schicksal*) (Freud 1923b, 37, 58).

40. As the Standard edition indicates, the idea of "free will" as compulsion from unconscious sources is also discussed in *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily life* (1901b, chapter XII (B)].

41. In the *New Introductory Lectures,* Freud is unsure whether the aggression directed against the ego, which can in extreme cases lead to suicide, comes from the superego or from the free, uncathected destruction drive in the ego and the id (Freud 1933a, 110).

42. A very good overview of Freud's theories of anxiety is Charles Shepherdson's solid "Foreword" to Harari 2001.

43. Following the same strategy as in "The Uncanny," Freud turns to the etymology of the word "Angst" as a confirmation of his hypothesis. The Latin *angustiae* means "narrowness, tightness," which may refer to the biological roots of the affect, the primal anxiety, and the shortness of breath experienced by the infant, caught in the narrowness of the birth canal (Freud 1912–13, 95).

44. Object-loss and castration anxiety are external threats, but the child learns to establish a relationship to certain inner excitations, feelings, and desires. Thus, the external danger is incorporated and can and must be handled with internal measures (Freud 1926d, 145).

45. At the end of the twentieth century, the notion of "trauma" has become increasingly popular, resulting in a specific area of studies, called "trauma studies" in which the notion of the "uncanny" also plays a minor but recurrent role, e.g., Caruth 1996; Hartman 1995 and 1997; LaCapra 1998 and 1999; Van Alphen 1997.

46. From a theoretical point of view, castration anxiety is in a later stage phylogenetically reinforced and forms the basis of social anxiety. The impact of castration anxiety and fear of object-loss or loss of love are so decisive in Freudian theory that they cannot be but phylogenetic experiences: they must be universal to mankind.

47. The idea that the unconscious cannot represent the death of the subject is also voiced in "The Uncanny." Here, we get a somewhat modified version. The subject tries to construct a representation of death by analogy with another fear: "the unconscious seems to contain nothing that could give any content to our concept of the annihilation of life. Castration can be pictured on the basis of the daily experience of the faeces being separated from the body or on the basis of losing the mother's breast at weaning. But nothing resembling death can ever be experienced; or if it has, in fainting, it has left no observable traces behind. I am therefore inclined to adhere to the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analogous to the fear of castration and the situation to which the ego is reacting is one of being abandoned by the protecting superego—the powers of destiny—so that is has no longer any safeguard against all the dangers that surround it (Freud 1926d, 129–130).

48. Freud is aware of the problem that birth is not actually experienced as a separation by the infant because in the first years of life, the child experiences his existence as a continuum with the mother's body. The question of the trauma of birth cannot be disconnected from the discussion between Freud and Rank, which fundamentally shapes Freud's theory of anxiety. In the *New Introductory Lectures,* Freud is more certain of the relation between

castration anxiety (and loss of love) and birth. "Fear of castration is not, of course, the only motif for repression: indeed, it finds no place in women, for though they have a castration complex they cannot have a fear of being castrated. Its place is taken in their sex by a fear of loss of love, which is evidently a later prolongation of the infant's anxiety if it finds the mother absent. You will realize how real a situation of danger is indicated by this anxiety. If a mother is absent or has withdrawn her love from her child, it is no longer sure of the satisfaction of its needs and is perhaps exposed to the most distressing feelings of tension. Do not reject the idea that these determinants of anxiety may at bottom repeat the situation of the original anxiety at birth, which, to be sure, also represented a separation from the mother"(Freud 1933a, 87).

49. The essay also appeared in the journal *Imago.*

Chapter 3

1. An interesting analysis of the relation between Rank's *The Double* and Freud's "The Uncanny" is offered by Webber, who points out that Rank already alluded to "The Uncanny" in his 1919 version of his text (Webber 1989, 89). The motif of the double has in recent years continued to attract attention in literary theory and criticism (especially of famous stories of doubles by Conrad, Dostoevsky, Hoffmann, Wilde, Poe, etc.). Both Freud's and Rank's studies are still topical to the subject. See Rogers 1970; Kofman 1975; Zins 1985; Jackson 1986; Johnson and Garber 1987; Coates 1988; Stoichita 1997, to name but a few examples.

2. "Descending into hell would thus signify an incestuous union with the mother. It seems to me to be related to the increasing strength of the incest taboo, when the most homely idea, that of the body and the vagina of the mother, turns into the most uncanny one, hell in such a way" (Reik 1923, 152). On this topic, without referring to Reik, see also Jonte-Pace (2001).

3. Julia Kristeva uses the same mechanism to explain nationalism in *Strangers to Ourselves*.

4. In his *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), Adorno again refers to "The Uncanny" in a different perspective, i.e., the relation of the artwork to the historical context and the alienation that is essential to the work of art: "The most extreme shocks and gestures of alienation of contemporary art—seismograms of a universal and inescapable form of reaction—are nearer than they appear to be by virtue of historical reification. What is considered to be intelligible to all is what has become unintelligible; what the manipulated repel as all too strange is what is secretly all too comprehensible, confirming Freud's dictum that the uncanny is repulsed only because it is all too familiar" (Adorno 1998, 183). This line of thought fits within the association between the "Freudian" uncanny and Marxist aesthetics that becomes prominent toward the end of the century.

5. Salzman comes close to the literary theoretical conceptions of the uncanny as related to the sublime. In his case study, he notes that "Uncanny feelings often describe the quality of extreme pleasure and fulfillment which comes with a sudden insight. It is the analogue of the religious experience in which one suddenly becomes aware of one's greater capacities for love and relatedness. Thus it would be important to expand and correct Sullivan's conception of uncanny feeling and see it not only as an anxiety phenomenon, but as a profound feeling accompanying an experience which rocks the foundation of the personality structure" (Salzman 1954, 102).

6. After 1970, the phenomenon of doubling from a clinical perspective is treated from a clinical perspective both in French and American psychoanalysis, e.g., Arfouilloux 1987, Assouly-Piquet 1986, Feigelson 1993, Félician 1980, Sabbadini 1989, Tenebaum 1990.

7. According to Safouan, there is a clear distinction between the early seminars and the later: "The last year of Lacan's teaching at the hospital of Sainte-Anne was also the one of the affirmation of his theory of the object of psychoanalysis, relying both on data from experience as well as on his critical reading of major psychoanalytic writings, those of Freud, but also those of pioneers and of contemporaries authors. His following seminars at the *Ecole normale supérieure* will be mostly devoted to the elaboration of his own doctrine and to the questions it entails. The references to psychoanalytic writings, apart from those of Freud, will become more and more rare" (Safouan 2001, 256, my trans.). Mérigot refers to one of those later seminars: "Jacques Lacan, in his seminar of 21 january 1970 remarks the ambiguity of the pair *heimlich-unheimlich* that 'accentuates the not being inside while evoking what is strange'" (Mérigot 1972, 102 n9, my trans.). Nobus lists eight sources to the "second" Lacan, between 1962 and 1970, among which three unpublished seminars (Nobus 1993d, 180–181).

8. Various unofficial versions of the seminar have been circulating as an internal document in the Lacanian psychoanalytic community. Several commentators on the uncanny do cite it, even before it officially appeared; see André 1986; Baas 1995; Nobus 1993c; Nobus and Quakelbeen 1993, and Vidler 1992. The best summary of the seminar, which devotes most attention to the uncanny and anxiety, is Safouan 2001. In the same year, an English introduction and paraphrase appeared by José Harari. Since the seminar appeared in 2004, there have been a few longer texts by Jacques-Alain Miller, and a thematic issue of *Lacanian Ink.*

9. According to Safouan, $-\varphi$ (the negation of the phallus) indicates precisely the imaginary castration by the metaphor of the father. In the case of the boy, it is denied on the level of perception by the presence of the biological penis in the place where the missing phallus should be. Paradoxically then, the missing phallus is missing. This entails that not all identification is related to perception one can also identify with a lack, even though it is denied by perception. "(. . .) this symbol $-\varphi$ designates the imaginary castration induced by the paternal metaphor. Lacan does not say it explicitly, but

his discourse cannot be understood otherwise. This castration attests itself in the tear that marks the image of the proper body both in the case of the boy and of the girl. This is what gives to the former the sentiment of his insufficience, gives to the latter the sentiment of her lack, and at that point, which, save from investing in this image, stays as a reserve at the level of the proper body" (Safouan 2001, 234).

10. Lacan remains close to Freud's suggestions that Olympia is "a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person" (Freud 1919h, 232n1), but his reasoning can be applied to the earlier episodes in the stories that precede Nathaniel's crises: his discovery in his father's study by the sandman who wants to steal his eyes, the poem that he reads to Clara in which she stares at him with the eyes of death, and even the ultimate crisis on the tower, misinterpreted by Freud, when he sees Clara's face in front of his spy-glass. Weber offers a further reading of "The Sandman" in terms of Lacan's conception of castration (Weber 2000). For readings of "The Sandman" in terms of psychosis rather than neurosis, see Kittler 1977 and Bresnick 1996.

11. Lacan gives another, clearer instance of this mechanism later on: "The specular image becomes the strange and invasive image of the double. This is what gradually happens at the end of Maupassant's life, when he begins to not see himself in the mirror any longer, or when he perceives in a room something, a phantom, that turns its back on him, and of which he knows immediately that it is not without having a certain rapport with him, and when the phantom turns around, he sees that is him" (Lacan 2004, 116, my trans.).

12. See also p. 364, where Lacan describes the animation of Olympia by Coppelius through the eye as object of desire. Apart from the etymology of the uncanny, this is the only passage in Lacan's seminar where Harari tries to understand the position of the uncanny in relation to anxiety (Harari 2001, 226–227).

13. Baas relates this notion of *Heim* to Heidegger's *Unheimlichkeit des Daseins*: "But, Heidegger specifies, 'the outside oneself' ['hors-de-chez-soi'] must be ontologically-existentially conceived as the most originary phenomenon, in other words, as the most intimate, in such a way, that in relation to it, what habitually appears as the most familiar, the most reassuring, the 'at home' ['chez-soi'] constitutes precisely the uncanniness of *Dasein:* 'The quietly-familiar being-in-the-world is a modus of the uncanniness of Dasein, not the other way round' ['*Das beruhigt-vertraute In-der-Welt-Sein ist ein Modus der Unheimlichkeit des Daseins, nicht umgekehrt*']. (. . .) Put differently: in anxiety, the 'chez-soi' becomes strange and the strange reveals itself as originary, familiar and intimate. The subject cannot but lose itself there, faint there" (Baas 1994, 115–116, my trans.).

14. Badiou singles out this passage to indicate how Lacan throughout the seminar strives to enlighten the affect of anxiety under "the unary trait" or "simplest signifier" that constitutes the divided subject S. "And anxiety,

signified canonically as affect, is no less at the service of this Enlightenment. Enlightenment co-present with that untranslateable appearance, Freud's famous *unheimlich*—more 'inhabited' than 'unhabitual,' Lacan comments—that 'strangeness' (étrangeté), that is impossible-to-say, which emerges in the word and attests, according to the affect of anxiety to a sort of incorruptibility of the real. In such a way that 'the veritable substance of anxiety is the what does not deceive, the outside of doubt'" (Badiou 2005, 70). Again, this is another way of saying that anxiety confronts the subject with the dimension of the Real and its existential strangeness to itself.

15. Hook 2003 goes into the same direction, via Kristeva's notion "the abject," which he seems to consider as equivalent to "uncanny," but does not use the term extimacy.

16. On the one hand, "the success of the ghost story in banishing these 'imaginary' fears depends on the reality of the foundation. Thus a healthy-minded even if very imaginative person will benefit more from the reading of weird fiction that a neurotic, to whom it will only be able to give a momentary relief." On the other hand, "ghost-story writers who always reverted to the same themes were the neurotics. Their tales were desperate attempts to free themselves from particular complexes. Authors who frequently changed their themes may be supposed to have successfully fought the remnants of their animistic beliefs" (Penzoldt (1952) 1965, 7).

17. This series from the *Presses Universitaires de France* aims at introducing and outlining a variety of academic subjects within the boundaries of a pocket book. The fact that *Que sais-je* devotes a volume to fantastic art and literature indicates that the topic is at that moment both a canonized topic of academic research and a widely recognized theme of public interest.

18. The textual position of these "sciences," in between occultism and metapsychics or parapsychology, already suggests that he does not to seem to hold them in high esteem.

19. Like Freud, Vax distinguishes between "accidental strangeness" occuring in everyday life, and the "concerted strangeness" staged or provoked for esthetical purposes, rather than "natural or artistic strangeness."

20. Vax grants that Freud did intuit difficulties of his theory (as in the case of the motif of separate body-parts which can work both in an uncanny or in a comic way in fiction), but he did not think them through by relating them to the "field of perception." In the context of 'The "Uncanny," Vax says, for instance, that "It is not the motif that makes the fantastic, it is the fantastic which accepts or does not accept to organize its universe around a motif" (Vax 1965, 34) or "Around the same motif, the human conscious organizes different fields of perception. It is the situation which makes the object humorous or disturbing, indifferent or tempting" (Vax 1965, 37).

21. "If he stays careful and modest, the critic is worthy of esteem. By revealing to me the beauty that had escaped me, he inspires in me a certain gratefulness and a little envy. But the superb of certain adepts of *metaliterature* is as pleasing as it is puerile. They relish, like Philaminte, in each other's inventions of the marvels unknown by the author of the text. They throw

themselves on the storytellers like schoolmasters that correct homeworks on the pupils that make them; or like the adolescents of the higher classes that lecture, to the small children that are good only to compose stories. That they gloss, that they divide, that they snobbishly straighten their ties at their ease! 'Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter'" (Vax 1979, 9).

22. Vax refers to the "etymological games" of thinkers like Jacob Boehme, Georg Friedrich Hegel, or Martin Heidegger. Morever, he is one of the few readers of "The Uncanny" who traces Schelling's definition to its original context in *Philosophy of Mythology* (1985). See also Vidler 1992.

23. Hunter also draws attention to the close relation between phenomenology, structuralism, and poststructuralism.

24. In 1965, Vax already described how Freud, as it were, becomes the victim of the uncanny. In trying to define the essence, Freud is trapped by the sense of mystery and the illusion of depth that provokes the sentiment of the strange and acts this out in his essay rather than finding the origin of the sentiment. "But, in applying this schema to the sentiment of the strange, Freud seems to have been duped at the same time by the general schemas of psychoanalysis and by what is insidious in the consciousness of language. And his theory which seems to find the profound root of a sentiment that presents itself as profound, appears profound at the same time. In fact, it *plays* the sentiment of the strange and prolongs it instead of considering it in itself" (Vax 1965, 36). As we will see, Cixous concludes her reading of "The Uncanny"—which is in many ways equally anti-theoretical—along the same lines, arriving at her point from a Derridian tradition.

25. Fraiberg's article appeared in *The Partisan Review,* a literary journal. She was, however, acquainted with Hecht's paper (Fraiberg 1956, 55 n 1).

26. "Das Erhabene" can be translated as "the sublime" or "the numinous." The two terms are related, but there is a difference in connotation. "The sublime" is an aesthetic concept that signifies a transcendental experience; "the numinous" is a theological concept that expresses a religious or sacred experience.

27. A contemporary of Prawer who uses the notions of the sublime, the demonic, and the uncanny in a similar sense is Angus Fletcher. Although Fletcher's *Allegory. The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964) is influenced by Freud's phylogenetic works, the two references to "the uncanny" in the index do not refer to "The Uncanny" but to Otto's notion of the demonic-uncanny (Fletcher 1964, 41n30) and to the motif of the robot in science fiction (Fletcher 1964, 55 n59). When he does refer to "The Uncanny," he relates it the sublime (Fletcher 1964, 245 n39).

28. This is somewhat remedied by Michael Steig's response to Kayser, which emphasizes the role of the comic in the grotesque and the reaction of ambivalence. Steig distinguishes between the grotesque and the uncanny in terms of their successfulness as defense mechanisms (Steig 1970, 258).

29. Like Freud, Kayser devotes a relatively large share of attention to Hoffmann's "The Sandman," focusing on various grotesque motifs: the isolation of the motif of the eye in the story, the function of the doll Olympia, Nathaniel's

madness, the estrangement of the artist from the everyday, common-sensical reality (personified in the character of Clara) surrounding him, and especially the reader's doubt between the various perspectives in the story.

30. A revised version of this inaugural lecture can be found in *Caligari's Children. The Film as Tale of Terror* (1980).

31. Prawer's perspective is comparative, even though he focuses mainly on German literature and expressionist cinema.

32. Very few critics have related "The Uncanny" directly to Jung. Exceptions are Cusick 1994 and de Martelaere 2000.

33. Prawer will return to Marxism in *Karl Marx and World Literature*, however he clearly warns his readers "[t]hat this is not a book about Marxism nor an attempt to construct yet another Marxist theory of literature" (Prawer 1976, vii).

34. In his reading of "The Sandman" Prawer showed that the figure of the bourgeois—the lawyer—is frequently depicted as uncanny (Prawer 1965b). In *Karl Marx and World Literature,* Prawer establishes a new link between Hoffmann, Marx, and Freud when he suggests that Marx not just anticipates Freud's sexual interpretation of the motif of blinding in "The Sandman" but surpasses Freud by adding a social dimension. "What ultimately matters about the blinding of the Schoolmaster in Sue's story is not simply that it provides an 'acceptable' substitute for castration. Marx presents it as an act of sadistic aggression perpetrated by one fictional individual against another in the guise of even-handed justice" (Prawer 1976, 98).

35. In the beginning of his lecture Prawer states that "there is much in my personal history, as in that of so many others of my age and background, which will never let me forget the dangers attending any exaltation of the irrational, the chthonic and the daemonic" (Prawer 1965, 3).

36. Prawer's theory did not leave many traces in the work of other scholars. Theodore Ziolkowski approvingly cites "The 'Uncanny' in Literature" in his *Disenchanted Images. A Literary Iconology* (1977) on several occasions. Ziolkowski's analysis of the historical "disenchantment" of the literary images he discusses (the talking statue, the animated portrait, and the magic mirror) is closely related to Prawer's idea of the gradual "secularization" of the numinous and the uncanny in literature from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Later references to Prawer's inaugural lecture are found in Todorov 1970; Tatar 1981; Jackson 1981.

37. The main structure of the argument is kept intact, but some of the theoretical points are updated and new theoretical sources (Todorov and Lacan) are introduced. The most substantial modification is found in the psychological approach to the uncanny. The work of Lacan, "with its conjunction of neo-Freudianism, structural linguistics and structural anthropology" and concepts like the Imaginary, the Symbolic, the Real, suture, the gaze, and the other scene, constitute a third important theoretical source for the psychoanalytic research of literature and film, even if Prawer admits that he has "not found Lacan's writings helpful, and that I doubt whether his influence—so strong at the time of writing—will long outlast him" (Prawer 1980, 121).

38. Wright made a PhD on E. T. A. Hoffmann under Prawer's supervision.

Chapter 4

1. Lyotard repeatedly refers to "The Uncanny" in his *Discourse, figure* (1971), a reading of the figure in terms of image and metaphor in the work of Freud and twentieth-century art. Baudrillard examines the notion in relation to the death drive and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976, 1993). Other eminent French scholars from that era have also briefly dealt with the uncanny, e.g., Michel de Certeau who plays on the signifier "inquiétante étrangeté" in *The Writing of History* (1975, 1988) and *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction* (1987)) or René Girard who discusses the essay in a short critical piece on the work of Lenz (1988).

2. Eleven years later, the Belgian Lacanian journal *Psychoanalytische Perspektieven* devoted a thematic double issue to "Het on-heimelijke." The volume is predominantly the work of one person: Nobus. Nobus's research stands out for its broadness in scope: not limiting himself to Lacanian sources, he includes the early "ego-psychological" case studies as well as a number of deconstructive and literary readings of Freud.

3. The text, which was based on Weber's *Habilition,* was published in German in Kahane 1981.

4. Norris also distinguishes between "'canny' and 'uncanny' critics, the latter being those (Paul de Man among them) who pursue deconstruction to its ultimate, unsettling conclusions" (Norris (1982) 1992, 100).

5. Dosse distinguishes between two periods in structuralism with 1967 as turning point, but I endorse his strategy of maintaining the overall denomination "structuralism" for the post-war intellectual climate in France.

6. In Todorov's account, he and Genette shared a more empirical interest, hence the explicit scientific ambitions of the journal that presents itself as "a place of study." It is perhaps important to note that Todorov and Genette are at the time appointed by the C.N.R.F, the French national research fund (Dosse 1998, 154–155).

7. According to Lucy Armitt, whose rhetorical reading of Todorov is in certain respects close to mine: "It is unfortunately the case that while most fantasy critics continue to recognize the centrality of Todorov's work to contemporary studies of fantasy and the fantastic, few fully appreciate the crucial role he has played in our understanding of the application of literary theory to such works" (Armitt 1996, 30).

8. It is remarkable that Richard Howard opted for the inverse choice when he translates Todorov's 1968-essay "Poétique" as *Introduction to Poetics.*

9. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," Todorov finds a confirmation of Freud's theory. However, once more he sticks to a conditional mode, leaving the reader in doubt as to his own stance: "The sentiment of the uncanny originates, then, in certain themes linked to more or less ancient taboos. *If we*

grant that primal experience is constituted by transgression, we can accept Freud's theory as to the origin of the uncanny" (Todorov 1980, 48, my emphasis).

10. Incidentally, Todorov does not use the phrase "inquiétante étrangeté" at this point. As we will see, later in the work he does refer to the proper French term. The question of the translation of "étrange" is not an easy matter, for the term seems to have more the connotation of queer, odd, miraculous in French than the more neutral "strange" in English. The fact that Todorov explicitly points out that his use of "étrange" does not overlap with "unheimlich" could have been an argument to opt for two different words in the translation.

11. The latter theme is in the final analysis the result of remedying "a deficient causality" by "an imaginary causality": things that cannot be explained according to natural laws are explained by appealing to the supernatural. This mechanism is called "pandeterminism" (Todorov (1975) 1980, 110). A consequence of this principle is what Todorov calls "pan-signification," according to which all elements of the world are experienced as meaningful and interrelated. This description is partly based on stories describing experiences of madness and drugs, and it is not hard to see the connection with what Freud calls "the omnipotence of thought."

12. When Todorov elucidates his terminology, he sticks to a discursive explanation in which "je" and "tu" refer to the primary interlocutory positions of speaker and addressee.

13. Howard deviates from Todorov in his translation of the second group, "les thèmes de tu" (the themes of you) as "themes of the other," possibly because the structuralist linguistic background is not so familiar to an English audience.

14. Whereas the series "ego—perception-consciousness—gaze" could be regarded as classically Freudian, the equation of the "other—unconscious—discourse" brings to mind Lacan's famous dictum that "the unconscious is structured like a language" and his opposition between (barred) subject and other (Other).

15. The examples selected by Todorov foreshadow some of the important emphases that will be made in later readings of the text: the woman as figure of the uncanny on the one hand, and "The Sandman," and the problematization of reading it entails on the other hand: "The equation Freud establishes no longer links merely an image and a meaning (though it still does that), but links two textual elements: the doll Olympia and Nathaniel's childhood, both present in Hoffmann's tale" (Todorov 1980, 150).

16. This criterion, casually interjected, returns several times throughout Todorov's argument, often in relation to psychoanalysis. For instance, Todorov explicitly approves of Freud's structural interpretation of "The Sandman," because the two textual elements, Olympia and Nathaniel's childhood, are "both present in Hoffmann's tale" (Todorov 1980, 150). In Chapter 4 on poetry and allegory, Todorov singles out a psychoanalytic interpretation of Gogol's "The Nose" on the basis of the same argument: "The psychoanalytic

interpretation (the disappearance of the nose signifies, we are told, castration) even if it were satisfactory, would not be allegorical, for nothing in the text explicitly invites it" (Todorov 1980, 72).

17. As the example of Nerval's *Aurélia* demonstrates, ambiguity and hesitation are explicitly inscribed in the text as "procedures of writing," e.g., the use of the imperfect tense and modalization (more specifically, the use of "hedges").

18. This is all the more so since—as Todorov pointed out in Chapter 3—the pure fantastic, where the ambiguity persists until the end, is relatively rare (Todorov 1980, 43). Mostly, we are dealing with mixed or transitory genres where the hesitation of the fantastic is ultimately solved. In these cases, a second reading may indeed change the genre of the story to either "the uncanny" or "the marvelous" from the beginning.

19. These intertitles have disappeared in the English translations. The general chapter titles have been preserved (in French and in English), but the subtitles have been left out. This editorial change, combined with the modified title, comes down to a pruning of much of the irony of the original.

20. According to Genette, this type of intertitle placed at the beginning of a chapter is typical for popular and comical stories: "Cervantes' model, after becoming the norm (antinorm) of comic narrative lived on well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuy, with variously sustained teasing effects: we find examples in Dickens (*Oliver Twist, Pickwick, David Copperfield*), Melville (*Mardi, Pierre, The Confidence-Man*), Thackeray (*Henry Esmond, Vanity Fair*), Anatole France (*La Révolte des anges*), Musil (in direct style), Pynchon (*V.*), Barth (*The Sot-weed Factor*), Jong (*Fanny Jones*)—and in Eco (*The Name of the Rose*), the last one as of now" (Genette 1997, 301). The formal outline of the intertitles may also be a parody on the then-popular fashion to start each chapter of a critical or theoretical chapter with an epigraph.

21. A similar tongue-in-cheek edge is found in the last, slightly hyperbolic intertitle of the third chapter, "Elegy of the marvellous" (Todorov 1970, 46, my trans.) or in the hesitating "Reserved conclusion" of Chapter 9.

22. "Why our work is not finished" (Todorov 1970, 80); "The way in which we are going to proceed" (Todorov 1970, 97); "Let's specify what we have been doing" (Todorov 1970, 148).

23. This hypothesis has been examined by numerous scholars of the fantastic and especially of the gothic, which is seen as a reaction to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rationalism and positivism. See for instance Castle 1995, Dolar 1991, Park 2003, and Von der Thüsen 1997.

24. From the Freudian corpus, Todorov selects "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis" (1923d) and the idea of pan-determinism or the omnipotence of thought in *The Psycho-Pathology of Daily Life.*

25. *Ecriture féminine* is usually associated with diverse theorists as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Monique Wittig. However, the movement is far less homogeneous than it appears in many accounts about the movement, such as those by Moi 1995 and Bowlby 1992.

26. So far, not much of Cixous's early work has not been translated. It, therefore, is much less known in the Anglo-Saxon world. All translations from the 1974-French edition of *Prénoms de Personne* are mine. The most elaborate comment on *Prénoms de Personne* is found in the second chapter of Conley 1992.

27. This is confirmed by Susan Sellers's characterizations of Cixous's early works in the first chapters of *Authorship, Autobiography, and Love* (1996), in which the death of the father is a central theme.

28. According to Breton, surrealism strives to attain a "réalité supérieure" or a "surréalité." As in Cixous's description of "le pluréel," contradictions and oppositions are transcended in the moment of the surreal.

29. At the end of the first part of the "Prédit," the notion of "Personne" is connected to Joyce's *Ulysses*: "It is not a coincidence if No One was at a crucial moment the name of Ulysses and if Ulysses gave rise again to the *Ulysses* with a thousand singularities of Joyce" (Cixous 1974, 6, my trans.). This allusion refers both to the *Odyssey* and to Joyce's punning on the name Ulysses. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus escapes the the one-eyed giant Cyclops (who could in Cixous's perspective be read as a symbol for the suffocating monoperspectivism of the Western subject) by calling himself "No one" in order to exploit the confusion between proper name and pronoun. Zarathustra, Nietzsche's philosophical persona, is also described as one-eyed.

30. The two fronts are not separate or mutually exclusive, they are bound up with each other. "All have dismanteled the great Proper, the denominated someone, but in order to pass the word to the infinite No One:—the artist in subjectivity will have to fight on the front of intersubjectivity as well" (Cixous 1974, 6–7). The blank line behind the colon indicates both the separation and the connection between the two fronts; the one goes over into the other, although they are not the same.

31. "Germeurs" is a pun on "cousin germain" (full cousin), "Germain" (German), and the French "germer" ("to germinate").

32. So, for instance, there are the multiple connotations of words and expressions like "le Propre," "Personne," and "le (pré)nom de Personne." Neologisms are created to open up existing words and to let new meanings arise, e.g., in the combination of homonyms into a new word: "le pluréel" and "le pluriel/surréel," or in the association of words: "cousins germeurs" or "text-cimes" (literally "texts-summits"). This neologism is proposed in the context of the double reading practice and fits within the isotopy "pousser le texte au seuil" (pushing the text to the brink), "lire au sommet" (reading at the top), and "faire pointer" (make pointed).

33. One instance of this is the title "Prédit" itself, which operates in the tension between "foreword" of *Prénoms de Personne* and "prediction," a manifesto-like statement that exceeds the limits of the book—as Sellers puts it—an introduction "to Cixous' view on literature and practice as a literary critic" (Sellers 1994, 27). Finally, "pré-dit," before language, connotes the theme of a return to pre-phallogocentric/prelapsarian language, to suppressed

and repressed meanings that can no longer be expressed by language as an instrument of power.

34. This is most apparent in the chapters on Hoffmann, "Les noms du pire" (The names of the worse, which contains a pun on the Lacanian Name-of-the-Father, "le Nom-du-père") and "L'incertitude intellectuelle" (intellectual uncertainty), which obviously refer to "The Uncanny," but it equally applies to the other chapters.

35. The full title of the first part of *Prénoms de Personne* dealing with German authors is "Du côté de l'autre. Regards sur les cousins germeurs." The other two parts are entitled "Ensemble Poe" and "Ensemble Joyce,"

36. The link with the fantastic is stated explicitly in the last part of the text, "To translate the *Unheimliche*," which was added in *Prénoms de Personne*. Here, Cixous returns to the semantic analysis made by Freud and reflects on the French translation of the term. She concludes that the French are not receptive to the specific type of fear which is called the uncanny. She relates this strong capacity of repression to the hegemony of the *cogito*, in other words to the strong rationalist streak in French thought. "That the critique of the truth—by philosophy and by psychoanalysis—has first been produced elsewhere than in France is not surprising for those who perceive the repressive power in our soil of logocentrism. A power more pressing and sustainable than with our German or Anglo-Saxon neighbours. It is not a coincidence that there is no fantastic literature in France (the traces that one finds of it are by the way infiltrations of the German fantastic). In general, we do not like disturbance, trouble, being decentered [decentrement]: that is also why it is so difficult to imagine a 'French humor'" (Cixous 1974, 37). As was already implicit in the "Prediction" this opposition between French and German/Anglo-Saxon (also found in the work of Gilles Deleuze) is a version of the opposition rationalism/romanticism.

37. *New Literary History* responds to this structure by including "The Uncanny" at the end of the volume in which "Fiction and its Phantoms" appeared. Although it is far from flawless, I will mostly use Robert Denommé's translation, unless in quotes from the French text, indicated as Cixous 1974.

38. This phrase is used by Freud in "Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" (Freud 1910c), although the allusion is not attributed. The term also plays an important role in Kofman's work.

39 Ricarda Schmidt is very critical of Cixous's reading of "The Sandman" in "Les Noms du pire." "Cixous says of her reading of 'The Sandman' that it is a reading from within; she dissociates herself from the alternative, 'external' and rational interpretation. The category 'within' manifests itself in Cixous's endeavor to comprehend Nathaniel's inner life, to follow his desire. Although she states at the beginning that the reader identifies briefly with any passing character, rather than with any one single person, it is nevertheless only Nathaniel with whose desire Cixous identifies. [. . .] By adopting a perspective from within Nathaniel, Cixous alters Hoffmann's tale in favor

of her analytic interest much as she accuses Freud of doing in his famous interpretation of 'Der Sandman'" (Schmidt 1988, 25).

40. Denommé translates the term "aérienne" as "lofted in the air," I prefer the term "air-born."

41. Lacan also drew attention to Freud's remarks about losing his way in Hoffmann's labyrinth (Lacan 2004, 61).

42. Conley points out that "most readings in *Prénoms de Personne* approach the question of limits between self and other, masculine and feminine, from the angle of the daughter, Cixous's own position in her early writings" (Andermatt Conley 1991, 20). I find this perspective on "Fiction and its Phantoms" rather limiting.

43. The link to German romanticism and the history of the motif of the puppet is explicit in footnote 2, page 26 of "La fiction et ses fantômes": "What to do with these puppets that have haunted the scenes of German romanticism?" (my trans.).

44. According to Cixous, the notion of character is always negative in Cixous. It is based on an outdated view of the unified subject that is imaginary and restrictive. Instead, Cixous "urges for figuration, not characterization, with possibilities of reading in different directions" (Conley 1991, 26).

45. A very interesting analysis of Cixous's dealing with titles, that draws attention to Derrida's "La double séance" is found in Stevens 1999.

46. This image from Derrida's text reappears literally in Cixous: the notion of the in between as well as the notion of a double session/double science that operates in between literature and philosophy or theory: "To take this double inscription of concepts into account is to practice a *double science*, a bifid, *dissymetrical* writing" (Derrida 1981, 208 n25). The image, in relation to the uncanny, is found in Kofman's introduction to *The Childhood of Art*, translated as "The Double Reading" (Albrecht 2007).

47. "We shall allow ourselves to be guided at times by and against Freud's design, by what is certain and by what is hypothetical, by science and fiction, by the object that is symbolized and by that which 'symbolizes.' We shall be guided by ambivalence and in conformity with the undecidable nature of all that touches the *Unheimliche*: life and fiction, life-as-fiction, the Oedipus myth, the castration complex, and literary creation" (Cixous 1976, 526).

48. In the first line of the quote Cixous almost literally echoes Derrida (Derrida 1981, 268 n 67).

49. This argument is similar to Todorov's claims that the supernatural is representative for the functioning of language.

50. It remains to be seen whether it was actually the *first* reading. Kofman's "Le double e(s)t le diable" appeared around the same time (1974) in *Revue Française de la psychoanalyse*, and Rey was also intensively working on the text. However, Kofman and Rey were only translated in the 1980s and never achieved the same status as Cixous.

Chapter 5

1. For instance: Kofman 1970, 1973; Milner 1980; Mahony 1982; Apter 1981; Wright 1984; Møller 1992; Assoun 1996; Memmi 1996; Weber 2000; Parkin-Gounelas 2001.

2. To give a few titles: Wright's *Feminism and Psychoanalysis. A Critical Dictionary* (1992), Hawthorn's *Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (1994), Bennett and Royle's *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* ((1995) 1999), Payne's *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (1996), Belton's *Words of Art* (1998), Jay's *Cultural Semantics*, Mulvey-Roberts's *Handbook of Gothic Literature* (1998), Brooker's *Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory* (1999), Wolfreys's *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (2004) and Barck's *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe* (2005).

3. According to Derek Hook (2003), the discursive instability of the uncanny is due to the ontological, bodily experience of the uncanny which has to do with unstable boundaries.

4. According to Foucault, "the author [. . .] is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion. One can say that the author is an ideological product, since we represent him as the opposite of his historically real function. (When a historically given function is represented in a figure that inverts it, one has an ideological production.) The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault in Masschelein 2002, 65). See also Royle 2003, 14.

5. Noteworthy are Granoff and Rey 1983, Adams 1983; Ronell 1989; Royle 1991 and 1999; Rostek-Lühmann 1995.

6. Inspired by Derrida, Royle wrote a study on telepathy and literature and devotes a chapter to it in *The Uncanny* (Royle 2003, 256–276 and Culler 2004).

7. Royle coins the term "portmanteau" for this type of concepts (Royle, 2006, 242–243).

8. In this essay, Weber demonstrates that Freud misreads the end of "The Sandman": what drives Nathaniel crazy is not the sight of the sandman in the crowd but Clara who stands in front of the haunted binoculars.

9. This more personal perspective is found in many psychoanalytic approaches, such as Nobus, "Freud versus Jentsch: een kruistocht tegen de intellectuele onzekerheid" [Freud versus Jentsch: a crusade against intellectual uncertainty] (1993), but it is not limited to it. See also Hertz 1985; Armitt 1996, 48–53; Lydenberg 1997, Wright 1998; Morlock 1995; Ellison 2001.

10. Among others, Milner 1982; Lyotard (1971) 1985; Castle 1995; von der Thüsen 1997; Sturm 1995; Park 2003.

11. See, among others, Cohen 1993; Coates 1991; Krauss 1993; Foster 1993; Rabaté 2005.

12. Gelder and Jacobs 1998; Bergland 2000. Others have established a link between Jewishness and uncanniness, starting from Freud's last text *Moses and Monotheism*, where the uncanniness of the Jews is related to castration and the primitive murder of the father (Shapiro 1997, Jonte-Pace 2001).

13. Stein 1984, Bauman 1991, Shapiro 1997, Jonte-Pace 2001.

14. See for instance Hartmann 1997; LaCapra 1998 and 1999; van Alphen 1997.

15. Ronell 1989; Vidler 1992; Krell 1992; Derrida 1993; Baas 1994; Därman 1995; Weber 1997 and 2000; Bowman 2003; Wolfreys 2002; Bernstein 2004.

16. Sadler 1996 and West 1999.

17. Bowman, for instance, finds fault with Royle's blend of Freudianism and deconstruction: "[. . .] he believes that deconstructive criticism attempts to make the familiar unfamiliar, and thus in this regard deconstruction is a strategy grounded in uncanny thinking, in bringing the unfamiliar to light. Hence [. . .] its familiarity with psychoanalysis. But any form of interpretation is supposed to take what is already familiar to us and make its unappreciated elements known to us" (Bowman 2007, 3).

18. Ruth Ronen wrote an article about the doll, the uncanny and contemporary art, but does not refer to any of these art shows. (2004)

19. In the book, the notions occur in the Derridean and Heideggerian sense. Danielewski, who who collaborated as sound assistant on *Derrida The Movie*, is overt about his being inspired by Derrida. The book is both a parody of and a tribute to deconstruction.

20. According to MacDorman, "Mori, like Freud, linked the uncanny valley to a 'human-specific' notion of death, and many have suggested that he had Freud in mind when he penned 'The Uncanny Valley'—which is possible since Freud's concept of the uncanny, *unheimlich*, was translated in Japanese as *bukimi* prior to the publication of Mori's paper. But MacDorman, who co-authored the definitive English translation of 'The Uncanny Valley,' has his doubts: 'There is nothing wrong with connecting Mori's ideas to Freud,' he says. 'But I don't think Mori was inspired by him'" (Kloc 2009).

21. E.g., MacDorman and Ishiguro 2006; Hanson et al. 2005; Bartneck et al. 2007, 2009; Oyedele 2007, Walters 2008.

22. Bryant 2006; MacDorman and Ishiguro 2006; Geller 2008; Duffy 2009; Kloc 2009.

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The Unconcept is the first genealogy of the concept of the Freudian uncanny. It traces the development, paradoxes, and movements of this negative concept through various fields and disciplines from psychoanalysis, literary theory, and philosophy to film studies, genre studies, sociology, religion, architecture theory, and contemporary art. Anneleen Masschelein explores the vagaries of this "unconcept" in the twentieth century, beginning with Freud's seminal essay "The Uncanny," through a period of conceptual latency, leading to the first real conceptualizations in the 1970s and then on to the present dissemination of the uncanny to exotic fields such as hauntology, the study of ghosts, robotics, and artificial intelligence. She unearths new material on the uncanny from the English, French, and German traditions, and sheds light on the status of the concept in contemporary theory and practice in the humanities. In this essential reference book for researchers and students of the uncanny, the familiar contours of the intellectual history of the twentieth century appear in a new and exciting light.

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